

Competition Turnout Tips from a Pro • Shoulder-in the Surefire Way

# PRACTICAL HORSEMAN

A full-page photograph of a rider on a dark horse jumping over a wooden fence. The rider is wearing a dark jacket, white breeches, and a helmet, and is smiling. The horse is in mid-air, clearing the jump. The background shows trees and a clear sky.

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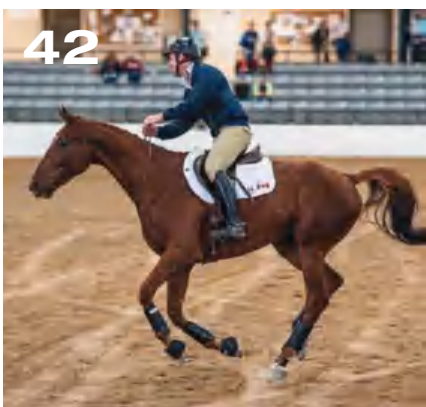
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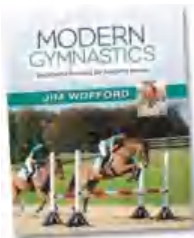
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## Editor's Note

## Natural Connection

After reading two stories in this month's issue, our profile on eventer Tamie Smith (page 28) and Tik Maynard's feature on the 2015 Thoroughbred Makeover (page 42), I'd planned on doing some natural-horsemanship training, a topic touched upon in both articles. I was going to start simple and see if my off-the-track Thoroughbred would follow me around the arena at the walk and trot, something we used to do years ago before my daughter arrived and free time became scarce.

But instead I ended up riding because it was a beautiful December day in the 70s, so we went on a trail ride.

Given the unusually warm weather, the trail ride probably made sense, but my decision had me thinking about how easy it is to put off or dismiss natural horsemanship as sort of an add-on to training. Tik's and Tamie's articles, however, make the case that it is the best foundation because it builds trust between horse and rider.

If you look at the photos of Tik and his horse, Remarkable 54, during the Makeover's freestyle and watch their video at [www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com](http://www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com), seeing how in tune Remarkable is with Tik is inspiring. Working at liberty and under saddle without a bridle, Remarkable wants to be with Tik and is having fun. It made me think that if you could achieve this much without a bridle, how much could you do with one?

In his article, Tik outlines three concepts that he used to retrain Remarkable. In the third, he discusses making a horse's world neutral. "I try to look at everything in the horse's world from his point of view," he says. For example, when Remarkable was scared of water crossing, Tik made it neutral by offering the horse food when he walked up to it.

Similarly, Tamie says she learned from Southern California horseman Allen Clarke that training must be driven by how horses think, not how humans think. She also uses bridleless riding in a round-pen to refocus a horse's attention.

When life seems to be getting busier and busier for everyone these days, it's easy to forego building the kind of relationship Tik and Tamie describe. The biggest requirements for it are time and patience. The next time I head out to the barn, I'm going to summon those and "think like my horse" to see where it leads.

Take care.

*Sandra*

Sandra Oliynyk  
Editor



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## Tip of the Month

"As my horses try to figure something out, I don't want them to feel frustrated or wrong. I would rather back up to a simpler exercise until they figure it out."—**Tik Maynard, page 44**





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**George H. Morris** is the former chef d'équipe of the U.S. Equestrian Federation Show Jumping Team. He serves on the USEF National Jumper Committee and Planning Committee, is an adviser to the USEF High-Performance Show Jumping Committee and is president of the Show Jumping Hall of Fame.

## A Leg-Based Discipline



**1** This looks like what I call a vintage southern hunter ride where riders from the South had a good feel and eye but were never taught the American classic position that riders in the Northeast or Southern California were. When I judged riders like this in equitation, there were some very good riders, but they didn't have the form, and I was always hard on them.

The wing is covering this rider's leg, and the photo is dark so critiquing it is hard, but it feels as if the rider could possibly shorten her stirrup a hole to ensure that she's not reaching for her stirrups. When I see someone stand up in the air like she is, it seems as if her heel could be a little lower.

Her seat is very high out of the saddle, a sign that she's jumping ahead. She also is ducking badly, throwing her body at the horse's neck with a roached back, two faults that often go together. She's throwing her hands up in a well-done long release. Overall, this is not a good example of form, but despite that, she probably is a very good hunter rider.

This is a quality horse and beautiful jumper. His knees are up and symmetrical. He's a little loose below them, but he's giving the fence plenty of air and showing a very round bascule.

Another historically southern thing is beautiful turnout and excellent horsemanship, and this dapple gray is an example of that. You can't get better turnout than this. He looks in good health, and everything about him and his rider is scrupulously clean. His mane and tail are beautifully braided. His ears, muzzle and fetlocks are neatly trimmed. The saddle pad and the rest of his dark tack fit well. Her riding clothes are neat and conservative. All of this is an example of American management and turnout.



**2** I wouldn't want this rider's stirrup any closer to her toe and she might even move the iron back on her foot a little. Years ago, you wanted about one-third of the foot in the iron, but now generally you want about a quarter of the foot in it. Hers borders on being on the tip of the toe, which is not good because the iron could easily slip off. Aside from that, this is a beautiful leg. Her ankles are flexed and her toes are out just enough and it's a tight lower leg.

Her seat is a little too far out of the saddle, an indication that she's jumping just slightly ahead. I'd like to see her seat closer to the saddle at this point in the jump. She has beautiful posture with her eyes up and ahead. Her back is straight and she is using an appropriate crest release for this level. As she advances, I'd like to see her hands move up a little less in a short release. In this type of release, the hands go up the crest a couple of inches instead of the 6 to 8 inches of a long crest release. Her goal should be an automatic release where she drops her hand a few inches and maintains a straight line from her elbow to his mouth.

This pony has a wonderful expression. I can't see his front end, but I'm going to presume he is like most of the great ponies and it's even and symmetrical. He jumps a little flat from his poll to the dock of his tail, but this is a very low fence that he just has to step over, which he's doing in a very nice way.

This pair is also well turned out. He looks healthy and is very clean, not easy to do with a gray horse. His mane is braided well with no flyaway strays. I like the clean, dark, well-used flat tack. The rider's clothes are conservative and clean and fit well as does the saddle pad.





**3** My whole life, I've evaluated riders by first examining the leg because as Capt. Vladimir Littauer and Paul Cronin have described, the American forward riding system is a leg-based discipline, not a seat-based one as in dressage. The first thing I would have this rider do is turn her stirrup iron so that it is at a right angle to the girth and so her little toe touches the outside branch. In the old days, we used to put our foot so our big toe touched the inside branch of the iron and the iron was not angled at all. This wedged us into the horse and was practical for fast riding, but it didn't offer enough fluidity or elasticity. The leg has evolved and Bert de Némethy taught us to slant the iron and feel the outside branch with our little toe. I'd also shorten this rider's stirrup a hole to help her get her heels down.

Her seat is out of the saddle just enough. I wouldn't want it out any farther. Her posture is excellent with her eyes up and looking ahead and a very good back. She's using a long release with her hands resting on the crest of the horse's neck to support her body. She could graduate to a short release.

This flea-bitten gray with specks of orange throughout his coat is pleasant looking, though not the same quality as the first two horses. He's got a dishy face and one ear is back. He's short necked and long behind the saddle. His knees are up though they're not even and he's loose below them.

He's very clean and his mane and tail are braided, which helps to dress him up. He's not as well turned out as the first horse, which I can tell by details like the hairs sticking out of the top of his tail. It looks as if it was a very hot day in which riding coats were waived. On occasions like this, it's appropriate to forego a coat as long as you have a choker or tie.



**4** I can't see this rider's leg because of the standard and the darkness of the photo, but from the shin down, it appears to be a very good calf that is in contact with her horse's side. The leg looks tight, and the rider looks in balance with him.

Her base of support is all right. She's been tossed out of the saddle the right amount, and there are no signs that she is jumping ahead or dropping back. Her posture is excellent with her eyes up and ahead. This is a very typical long crest release, which is not just a modern, fashionable technique that I developed. Some criticize that it is being used rampantly these days, but it has been used throughout time and serves to give the horse maximum freedom and hold the rider's body forward. It's just that in the old days, people used the automatic release more.

I can't see this horse's face or body too well. He doesn't appear to have a good front end. His knees are up and parallel to the ground, but he's very loose in front and his topline is very flat. It's a low jump, and he's got enough thrust and scope to just step over it and fling up his front end. He doesn't really have to jump or use himself. Maybe over a bigger jump, he'd look better.

The turnout is OK, but his mane is flying around. The baby pad looks clean, but the rider is carrying a light-colored whip, which is distracting. Usually I like darker, more conservative colors for whips, but that's her preference. It would not be appropriate in the hunter or equitation ring. The rest of her tack looks clean and well-cared for. I'd prefer to see her wearing a choker, which looks neater. 🐾



**Take a trip back in time to read some of George's classic *Jumping Clinic* critiques at [www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com](http://www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com).**

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# Choose the Best Irish Sporthorse

Place these horses in your order of preference. Then turn the page to see how your choices compare to sporthorse judge **Julie Winkel's**.

**W**hether I am judging a model class, evaluating a prospect for a client or sizing up the yearlings at home, I first stand back and look for an overall impression of balance and symmetry. My ideal horse "fits" in a square box. By that, I mean he is defined by matching and equal parts, both front to back and side to side. This allows for athletic ability, soundness, trainability and longevity in the job.

A horse who fits in a box will have a body that is made up of one-third shoulder, one-third back and one-third hindquarters. I like to see the withers and point of croup at the same level. The horse's stance, from point of shoulder to buttock, should equal the distance from the height of the withers to the ground.

I also always look at the eye because I want to see a horse with clear, alert vision. From the head, I move down the neck to the shoulders, along the back to the hind end and leg construction.

For jumpers, the emphasis should be on hindquarters with a good length from the hipbone to the point of the buttock for power off the ground. For dressage horses, a more upright build and a shorter neck are desired. For hunters, I look for a level topline, a well-sloped shoulder for fluid movement and the ability to lift in the air over fences as well as quality and typiness.

## 6-year-old mare Irish Sporthorse

**DISCIPLINE:**  
Foxhunting/  
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## 6-year-old mare Irish Sporthorse

**DISCIPLINE:**  
Jumpers



## 5-year-old gelding Irish Sporthorse

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To learn about Julie's evaluation philosophy and to see an example of how to best present your horse for this column, visit [www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com](http://www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com).

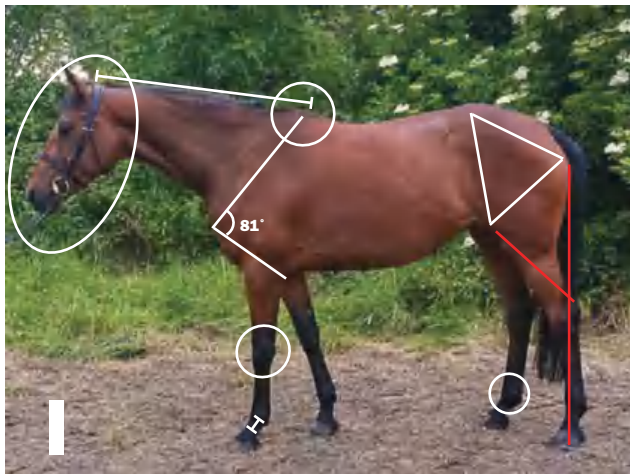


Owner of Maplewood Stables in Reno, Nevada, **Julie Winkel** has been a U.S. Equestrian Federation "R" hunter breeding judge for 30 years and a Canadian Equestrian Federation "S" judge for more than 15 years. She co-chairs the USEF Licensed Officials Committee and serves on the Young Jumper Championships and USHJA Board

of Directors. Julie has judged pony and hunter breeding at Devon and Upperville, the Sallie B. Wheeler Championship and the USHJA Hunter International Derby. She hosts annual sporthorse inspection tours at her facility, where she stands her grand prix stallions, Cartouche Z and Osilvis. As a rider, trainer, judge and breeder, Julie focuses on which traits make athletic horses and how structure affects soundness.



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Top call this month goes to this balanced mare with a beautiful topline. She shows even distribution of shoulder, barrel and hind-quarter. She is as tall as she is long, so she fits into our ideal box.

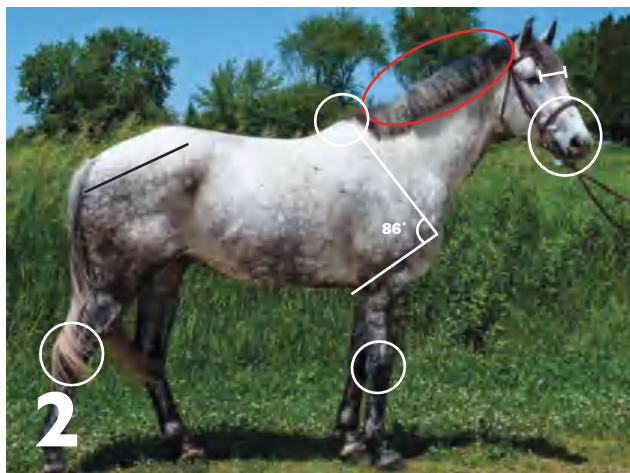
Her feminine head carries a sweet expression. Her throatlatch joins her head and neck cleanly and at a good angle. With nice length and shape, her neck attaches high into her shoulder. The point of her elbow is under the front of the withers for ideal balance.

Her well-laid-back shoulder attaches to well-defined withers, which flow to a sturdy, strong back.

Her shoulder's ample length and slope allow for good stride length.

This mare's front legs sit properly under her body with correct alignment and adequate size to the knees and fetlocks. Her pasterns show good length and slope for ideal concussion and elasticity.

Her hindquarter exhibits an equilateral triangle (from the point of hip to the buttock to stifle), which creates the most efficient movement. Her hind leg is a touch behind her, and I prefer a bit more length from stifle to hock, but overall, this is a very nice horse that has 'hunter' written all over her.



Our second-place gelding strikes me as sturdy. While the same breed as the mare, he looks better suited to dressage or show jumping due to his heavier frame, good substance of bone and large joints.

We can see nice distance between his eyes, indicative of intelligence. He has large nostrils and nice mouth length for bit sensitivity. His throatlatch could be tidier, but his head-to-neck connection should allow for easy flexibility.

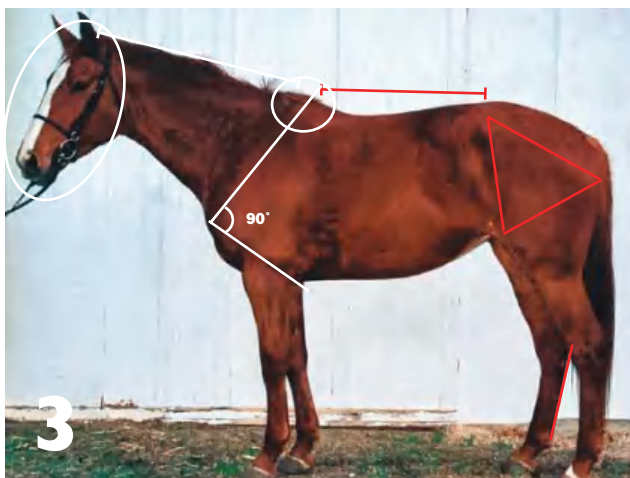
He has a bit of ewe neck that can be resolved with proper training. At 5 years old, he is likely just beginning to develop the crest of

his neck. The placement of the neck on his shoulders is ideal for uphill balance.

His long, sloping shoulder attaches to an upright humerus (point of shoulder to elbow), which allows for freedom of movement. His well-defined withers will naturally carry a saddle, placing the rider in the center of balance.

His short, strong back joins a strong hindquarter and well-placed hind leg. His great length from point of hip to buttock creates a big reach and powerful hind engine.

While he is a bit coarse for my taste, this is a promising youngster.



This cute mare places third due to some structural flaws that aren't dire but are notable.

She has a kind face with large nostrils and a soft eye. Her neck shows nice length but is tubular, creating a low connection to her shoulder. This restricts range of motion, although in this case, it is minimal. Her shoulder shows a correct slope to aid range of motion.

She has well-defined withers and shows correct alignment of her front limbs. However, her back is quite long and weak, which predisposes her to back soreness.

Her hind end slopes downward, making her "goose-rumped." This

creates a triangle that is out of balance. The point of buttock to the point of stifle and the point of her hip to her stifle are too short. This means the attached muscle is shorter, which limits her range of motion and power from the hind limbs.

Additionally, she shows sickle-hocked conformation, where the hind leg slants forward below the hock. This predisposes horses to curbs, minimizes the range of motion and loads stress on joints, ligaments and tendons of the hind legs.

Still, this is a useful, attractive mare that just lacks the quality of our winner and the sturdiness of the second gelding. **B**



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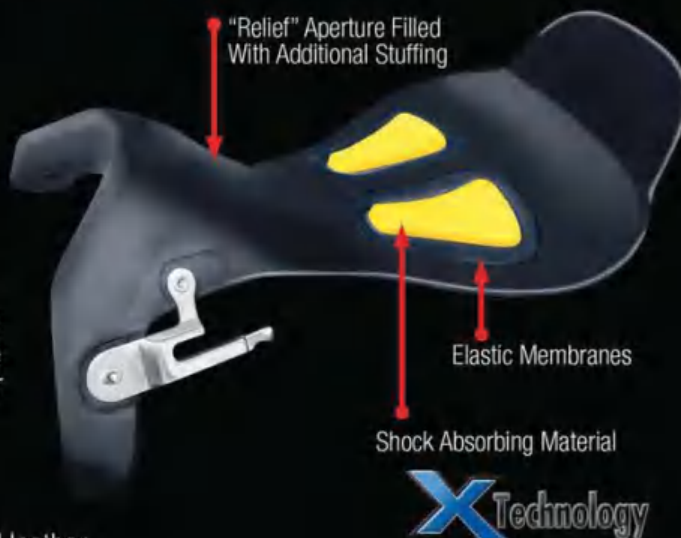
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Based at Fox Covert Farm, in Upperville, Virginia, **Jim Wofford** competed in three Olympics and two World Championships and won the U.S. National Championship five times. He is also a highly respected coach. For more on Jim, go to [www.jimwofford.blogspot.com](http://www.jimwofford.blogspot.com).



## Why Gymnastics?

Because gymnastics tie in to the Training Scale, they benefit every horse.

Sometimes my clinics are more fun for me than they are for the participants, especially during the question-and-answer sessions. I like to have Q&A at my clinics and seminars whenever possible because that means I am talking about something that interests at least one other person in the room. It's better than delivering the same stale, canned lecture I gave last week (and the week before)—and the questions keep me up to date on issues that are currently hot topics for the general membership. Most of the time, I have been asked the question before and have a response. (I wrote a column on the most common clinic questions a few years ago. You can find it at [PracticalHorsemanMag.com](http://PracticalHorsemanMag.com).)

I get a question every now and then, however, that makes me

Gymnastics are limited only by the imagination of the trainer. Bert de Némethy, the U.S. Equestrian Team's legendary show-jumping coach, once told me that when he designed cavalletti or gymnastics, he was taking responsibility for the placement of the horse's step or stride. The curved cavalletti pattern you see here teaches horses to maintain the regularity of their step even when their body is curved. Because the distance between each rail changes from 3 feet on the inside to 6 feet on the outside, Allison Springer has been careful to aim Sophia at exactly the correct place on the first cavalletti so that Sophia has room for one step at her normal working trot between each cavalletti. You can see from Sophia's bending that Allison's aids are classically correct.







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stop and think. At a recent clinic, I was discussing the gymnastic exercises I planned to use that day when a young lady held her hand up and asked, “Jim, OK, my horse is a good jumper and we can do these exercises for sure, but why do you use gymnastics in the first place?”

I have heard variations of this question before and gave my short version of the answer: Gymnastics, by which I mean placing any two or more obstacles a certain measured distance apart, help both your horse and you to jump better. They improve your horse’s footwork, technique and confidence. At the same time, you get a chance to learn through repetition, to jump in a predictable fashion and to think about one particular part of your jumping motion at a time. For example, how do your ankles feel when you land or how do your elbows follow your horse’s mouth in the air?

Although these reasons are all valid, it struck me later that gymnastics are a much wider and deeper subject than my short response suggests and that we ought to talk about my answers in greater detail than I can when under the time pressure of a clinic.

**The next time you jump some gymnastics, I want you to keep this sequence in your mind because this is what I am looking for—calm, straight, poised, balanced and attentive. One of many advantages of gymnastic work is that you already know the correct answer. Each time you take a step or a stride, your mind should already be planning to execute the next part of the gymnastic. When the rider jumps a gymnastic line, her head should remain at the same level throughout the exercise and her seat should come out of the saddle the same amount that she would show during the rising part of her posting-trot motion. When Allison and Sophia jumped this line, you can see why I said, “Come again, Allison. Stay a little closer to the saddle and lower your hands at the top of the bascule.” The next time you see Allison, you will notice the results of her hard work over exercises such as this one.**

## Carefully Measure Distances

One characteristic of gymnastic jumping is that the distances used are very carefully measured. When you set up your exercises, don’t rely on the accuracy of your step; use a tape measure. The reason: The distance you are using is designed to produce a certain effect on your horse’s stride so that you can concentrate on that effect when riding the gymnastic. For example, I use a placing rail 9 feet before the obstacle at the start of my gymnastics. This rail does exactly what its name says—it places your horse’s feet for the correct takeoff point over the first obstacle. If this rail is too close or too far away from the obstacle, you will get incorrect jumping until you measure the distance exactly and put the rail in the correct spot. There

are enough variables involved in training horses without introducing one variable that we could otherwise control.

## Predictability

I think one of the main reasons that horses and riders like (and benefit from) gymnastic jumping so much is that their activity becomes predictable. When you trot into a gymnastic, you should already know the desired outcome. You can devote your time to riding in a predetermined rhythm rather than thinking, “Boy, I hope this works.” Because you and your horse move in a rhythm, you will both relax and your confidence will improve.

Relaxation is important for several reasons. When your horse relaxes, teaching him to jump in good form is easier. Most horses jump well—meaning they use their



Gymnastics do not have to take place on level ground. They can have the same beneficial effect on cross-country horses and riders as gymnastic work done in an arena. Sharon White is introducing Don Sheffield (Shu) to downhill bounces. Shu had already been introduced to the concept of both single and double bounces on level ground, so this exercise is the logical next step in his educational progression. We can tell that Shu is green but willing—he lands a bit short after the first rail. Sharon is fixing this by closing her lower leg as he lands. With the slightest encouragement, Shu is far more confident about the second and third rails. This exercise is built on an incline that has some slope to it, but it is not yet what I would call steep and can be jumped in both directions. The rails start out quite low, considering that Shu is a Preliminary horse, but I never get in trouble by making the jump too low at first. Once my horse understands the concept, I can raise the rails.

legs correctly—when they are at liberty. It is only when we place our weight on their backs and interfere with their mouths that they have problems. Gymnastic jumping teaches your horse to jump just as well with your weight on his back as he does at liberty. In order to achieve this, the majority of your early gymnastic lessons with me will be on a long or loose rein. I want you to learn to be an intelligent passenger, and I want your horse to become intelligent and independent of your actions. Only after you are secure in your saddle without pulling on your horse's mouth and your horse is capable of maintaining his speed and rhythm without help from you, then, and only then, are you ready for more sophisticated work over fences.

## Training Scale Similarities

Before I go on, make a mental note of the similarity of this process to the dressage Training Scale: rhythm, relaxation, contact, impulsion, straightness and collection. As

soon as you move in a rhythm, you will start to relax. Once you are relaxed and stable in the saddle while jumping, I will introduce contact to you and your horse. But I will not introduce you and your horse to the use of contact over fences



It is hard for me to talk about jumping without talking about dressage. You should notice the order in which I talk about changing your horse's stride: We go forward first, then we collect. This is as true of jumping as it is of dressage.

until your position is very stable and your horse has learned self-carriage and initiative on his own. Once the two of you are both self-confident, I will then introduce you to the use of contact when jumping.

After practice, you and your horse will become comfortable jumping with a connection between your hand and his mouth. Still using gymnastics, I will then introduce you to controlling your horse's impulsion by lengthening and shortening his stride. It is hard for me to talk about

jumping without talking about dressage. You should notice the order in which I talk about changing your horse's stride: We go forward first, then we collect. This is as true of jumping as it is of dressage.

At this point, I will introduce gymnastics that teach you and your horse to deal with straightness, which is another way of saying that we have to make sure you and your horse can jump angles, narrows, corners and so on.

Just as with dressage, collection is the last thing we introduce to our horses.

Collection while jumping, Jim? Really?

Yes, really. Let's talk about it by, as usual, talking about dressage first. If I get

on a 4-year-old Thoroughbred fresh off the track, sit upright, squeeze with my heels and maintain the contact with my reins, what will happen? You got it; I will be off like a rocket. My "green bean" will lean on the contact, transfer his weight to his forehead and increase his speed. That response isn't what I want but is what I will get. Now, let's revisit the same horse four years later and see what correct training can do. After I warm him up and then apply the same aids as before, the horse



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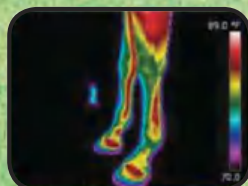
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will respond to my aids by rounding his step and increasing his energy without changing his rhythm or balance.

OK, that is a crude description of dressage collection, so what about jumping collection?

Let's take the same green 4-year-old Thoroughbred and see what happens to his jumping when I take a contact in the air over a fence. He will invert his back in the air and land going faster than when he took off, much the same response he gave when I took a contact on the flat. However, after four years of correct jumper training, if I take a stronger contact in the air, he will round his back and land with a collected stride. Given the interconnected nature of



You should realize that gymnastic jumping can be a valuable tool for dressage horses as well. A day of gymnastic jumping can keep your dressage horse from becoming bored.

modern show-jumping courses, the advantages of this are obvious.

Throughout this column, I have been talking about using gymnastics to improve your horse's jumping. However, you should realize that gymnastic jumping can be a valuable tool for dressage horses as well. A day of gymnastic jumping can keep your dressage horse from becoming bored. It can also help you supple your horse. For example, if he is stiff on his left side (which means his muscles are short on the right side), you can canter a circle to the left over small—2 feet or less—obstacles. After a few repetitions, he will start to land on his inside lead, lower his head and neck in the air and stretch his body as he jumps. Gymnastic jumping is a valuable tool for almost every horse. 🐾

Purchase a copy of Jim's book, *Modern Gymnastics: Systematic Training for Jumping Horses* at [www.equinenetworkstore.com](http://www.equinenetworkstore.com).

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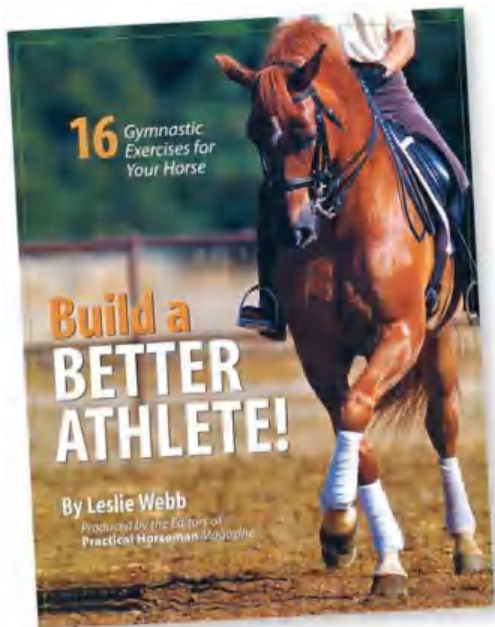
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# Gymnastic Exercise: Shoulder-In

Here's a clear introduction to the first of the lateral movements.

**By Leslie Webb ■ Photos by Tass Jones**

**S**houlder-in is the first true lateral movement. In leg-yield, which lays the sturdy foundation for the lateral movements, the horse moves sideways as well as forward. But leg-yield itself isn't technically a lateral movement. The distinction? In leg-yield, the horse stays straight from poll to tail. For a true lateral movement, his body bends evenly from poll to tail around your inside leg.

That even bending through the body is what you're going to teach your horse with shoulder-in. In this pattern, his outside shoulder comes in off the track and aligns with his inside hind leg so he's on what we call "three tracks." If you watched him coming toward you, you'd see his outside hind, his outside fore directly in front of his inside hind, and his inside fore. (When you can see all four legs evenly spaced, by the way, he's said to be traveling on "four tracks," as he does in the "baby" shoulder-in called shoulder-fore, and in travers, renvers and half-pass.)

## It's Not Called "Dr. Shoulder-in" for Nothing

I usually introduce shoulder-in when my horses are stepping up from Training to First Level. Whether you do dressage or your horse is a hunter, equitation horse, jumper or eventer, you can and should introduce it, too, because it's a useful—some say the most useful—gymnastic pattern that ...

- Supplies your horse and enhances his elasticity and freedom of movement all the way from shoulders to hindquarters.
- Strengthens him and increases his engagement by getting him to lift his shoulders in front and to step farther under himself and carry more weight behind.
- Straightens him and improves his obedience to your aids by getting him to move more from your inside driving leg to your outside half-halting rein.
- Prepares him not only for the rest of the lateral exercises, but for such upper-level movements as canter pirouettes and such on-course efforts as tight or rollback turns,

balanced corners and jumps that are close to a corner.

■ Saves your bacon! Shoulder-in is the most absolutely wonderful tool when your horse wants to spook. From the saddle, you cannot physically pull him past a scary object, but when you gain control over his shoulders, you can push him. Say he's young or green, he's at his first show and he absolutely doesn't want to trot up centerline toward the scary-looking judge's stand. Just put him in a shoulder-fore. The judge won't care. In fact, she'll probably say, "Hah! What a smart rider. A little shoulder-in is going to get her past this trouble spot without a fight."

Shoulder-in is also a lifesaver if you're on a young horse who wants to start bucking: If he's in shoulder-in, he can't buck. At that point, even if it's not the world's most correct shoulder-in, who cares? You're keeping a dangerous situation from developing.

## Shoulder-in Prerequisites

Here are the tools you need to succeed:

- Review asking your horse to go for-



## Start Leg-Yield on the Rail

The best way to show a horse he can travel straight down the rail with his haunches on the track and his shoulders off is with a movement he already knows: leg-yield. But instead of asking Cassiano to move diagonally across the arena while staying straight through his body and parallel to the rail, I'm asking him to stay straight through his body but to move parallel to the rail and at an angle to the track. I set him up by riding a 20-meter circle, which required almost no bend through his body. As I approached the rail in the corner, I asked for a few steps of spiral-out—with the feel of pushing his haunches further out than his forehand—to position him on about a 40- to 45-degree angle to the rail, but straight through his body with his outside shoulder and hip aligned, and clearly on four tracks.

Now I'm just asking him to continue straight down the rail, rhythmically squeezing my inside (left) leg on the up-beat when his inside hind and outside fore are in flight. In the same moment, a squeeze from my outside (right) half-halting rein raises and "pauses" his outside fore and holds him in case he wants to bulge or lean into his right shoulder. My inside (left) rein maintains just enough flexion that I see his left eyelash. And my outside (right) leg is a hair behind my inside leg and fairly passive: Even if Cassiano wants to move his haunches a little too much to the rail, as long as he maintains his forward energy and stays straight from poll to tail, it's kind of what I want him to do. My shoulders are square and perpendicular to the angled track, and my hips are shooting light beams straight out on either side of his neck on an angle into the arena where I want his haunches looking. If he starts to overbend, slow or lose this angle, I'll circle 20 meters, then start over. At the end of the arena, I'll circle 20 meters before straightening him and continuing around on the rail.

ward and back, turn on the forehand in leg-yield position, leg-yield itself, spiral-in and -out and counter-canter so you recall the feel of making a subtle but critical adjustment to your rider position.

■ Sitting trot, because you'll have complete control over your horse's up- and down-beat. If, however, sitting the trot gives you so much difficulty that it upsets your position or makes his job harder, by

all means post.

■ A new rider position. In simpler exercises, such as forward and back, spiraling in and out, your hips and shoulders should always be perpendicular to the track. Now is one of the few times when you're going to keep them parallel to the track by making them unparallel to each other. Let me explain: In shoulder-in, your horse's haunches are going to

travel straight down the long side, but his forehand is going to come in on about a 30-degree angle. Because your hips, thighs and the upper part of your calves control his hindquarters, that part of your body has to continue facing down the long side, perpendicular to the rail. But because your torso and shoulders influence and control his forehand, they have to turn slightly and face into the arena.



Try it right now as you're sitting there reading. I'm going to talk you through a shoulder-in left, so we'll go that way: Put your elbows by your sides and your fists closed in front of you as if holding the reins. Keep your seat straight and

square in your chair (think "laser beams are shooting straight ahead out of my hips") while you very subtly turn your upper body about 30 degrees, not with a big twisting or tipping, but by staying perfectly level as you bring your left

shoulder and upper arm back a bit and your right shoulder and upper arm a bit forward. What to do with your head? It must match your shoulders, but with your eyes still looking down the long side where you're going. Got it? Great!

## Prepare a 10-Meter Circle

1. Before asking for a shoulder-in left on the rail, I ride a 10-meter circle in the corner to establish the even poll-to-tail bend Cassiano will need. I'm carrying my whip on the inside because my inside leg aid is going to be the dominant one. I want my whip right there to touch or tap him if my leg needs a bit of reinforcement. For the moment, though, he's nicely forward and energetic. I'm sitting square and still with my outside leg a bit back, weight in my heel and my hips and shoulders perpendicular to the 10-meter circular track. And I'm starting to look for the feeling that when I half-halt my outside (right) rein on the up-beat—when his inside hind and outside fore are in flight—he responds by bringing his outside fore up and around, almost as if ...

2. ... he's creating the bend in his shoulder by crossing his outside fore in front of his inside fore.

3. And here we are on the down-beat of the last stride of the circle: I'm still sitting perpendicular to the circular track, my hips and shoulders looking where his chest is looking, my outside leg still back. In the next step, the moment his inside fore and outside hind touch down and he starts the up-beat, I'll change my rider position. My hips will look down the long side to tell his haunches to go straight while my shoulders will look into the ring on about the 30-degree angle I want his shoulders to assume—almost as if his forehand is staying on the circle for one more stride. And with that, we'll be in shoulder-in.





## Shoulder-In

1. After riding a 10-meter circle and asking for shoulder-in, I may have Cassiano a hair over-angled, but he's still evenly and correctly bent from poll to tail: His nose is at the point of his shoulder; if he had not just brought his outside fore in before setting it down, he'd be traveling on three aligned tracks. I'm not trying to pull his shoulders in. I'm shaping him by keeping my inside leg rhythmically strong at the girth, taking a slight indirect rein on the inside, keeping my outside leg back and creating an "inside leg to outside rein" connection by maintaining a half-halting contact on my outside rein. (Here's a helpful trick: I'm using the shadow my arena fence casts to keep Cassiano's track down the rail straight.)

2. On the up-beat, Cassiano is aligned on three tracks. I'm half-halting on my outside rein, sitting deeper on my inside seat bone and driving strongly with my inside seat and leg. I'm also shooting those light beams out of my hips, straight down the track, while my shoulders continue to look to the inside of the arena.

3. In the next step, on the down-beat—note that Cassiano's outside fore is once again a hair past his inside hind—I soften my outside half-halting rein but continue to hold him fairly strongly with my inside leg.

4. And in the next step of the up-beat, I again bring my outside shoulder back and down to half-halt on the outside rein, asking Cassiano to pause and hover his outside fore and bring it a bit more ...

5 ... to the inside as my strong inside driving leg and my rider position—hips looking straight down the rail—keep his haunches continuing straight, so he stays in shoulder-in and doesn't circle.





## If I Lose The Bend

... and I can't re-create it within one stride by using a little more indirect rein, sitting a little deeper on my inside seat bone and pushing more strongly with my inside leg, I immediately circle 10 meters. I relax my inside indirect rein and my inside leg, turn my seat so it's again parallel to my shoulders and perpendicular to the 10-meter circular track—and Cassiano circles. As we come back around toward the rail, I'll repeat the process of setting him up for a shoulder-in.



**Adapted from**  
***Build a Better Athlete!*** by Leslie Webb with permission from The Equine Network. Softcover, 120 pages, \$19.95. Available at [www.EquineNetworkStore.com](http://www.EquineNetworkStore.com).

■ Leg-yield on the rail. When leg-yield on the rail feels dependable and comfortable in both directions, you're ready to ...

### Ride a Shoulder-In

Tracking left, pick up an energetic sitting

trot. When your horse is listening and light in your hand, which means he's elevated in his shoulders and actively using his hind end, come around the short side of the arena. As soon as you've come through the second corner onto the long side, immediately ride a 10-meter circle. Sit deeper on your inside (left) seat bone, with your inside leg at the girth, your outside leg a hair behind it and your hips and shoulders perpendicular to the track. You never want this to feel as if you're pulling him around with your inside (left) rein. Instead, it's very much

like a spiral-in. Every time his inside hind leg and outside fore start to leave the ground, bring his shoulder just a tiny bit in by pressing with your outside leg and giving a strong inward half-halt (as you squeeze your outside shoulder back and down, bring your outside rein against his neck to almost push against his shoulder). The feeling you're after: Instead of reaching straight out in front, his outside fore comes up and around so he's shaping the circular track.

As you come around on the last strides of the circle and start to feel his shoulders approaching the track on the long side, continue asking him to circle. In the next stride, when he's almost straight on the track, continue to say "Circle." But in the next stride, when you feel as if he'd make another circle if you kept going, ask him for a shoulder-in down the long side instead: At the very moment he's bringing his outside shoulder up and in for another stride of circle, take a little bit of an indirect inside rein—not by pulling, but by turning the knuckles of your

left hand toward your right hip. One of the first and biggest mistakes a horse will attempt to make in shoulder-in is to lean on his inside shoulder. That extra little bit of indirect left rein throws just a penny's worth more weight onto his right shoulder—his outside shoulder—which will really make him engage, sit down and get more expressive with his inside hind.

Encourage your horse's shoulder to come off the track and stay off by turning your chest and shoulders toward the arena on about a 30-degree angle. And tell his haunches to continue straight down the long side by directing laser beams out of your hips and straight down the track. On each up-beat, when his inside hind and outside fore are in flight, strongly squeeze your inside leg at the girth, almost with the feeling that you're pushing your inside hip toward his outside shoulder and down the track.

After three to five strides—your horse won't be able to hold the bend longer than that at first—ride another 10-meter circle. He already has his forehand off the rail, even if he's lost a little bend, so just relax your inside leg, soften your inside indirect rein, smoothly bring your hips around so they're once again parallel to your shoulders and perpendicular to the circular track and—boom! You're circling.

As you return to the rail, repeat the aids for shoulder-in: Think, "We're going to circle again"—but the moment your horse's shoulders come away from the track and both your chest and his are facing into the arena, turn your hips so they're facing down the long side, take an indirect inside rein, add a very strong inside leg and continue in shoulder-in to the end of the arena.

Now, this is important: On a young horse or on one who's just learning shoulder-in, I never get to the end of the long side and simply straighten him by bringing his shoulders back onto the track in front of his haunches. Instead, I ride one more 10-meter circle in the corner because it re-establishes any balance or bend he may have lost and reinforces the idea of bringing his shoulder up and in.



(I begin or finish shoulder-in without circling only when he can stay balanced, expressive and almost perfect in shoulder-in all the way down the long side.)

## Make It Even MORE Gymnastic

When you're comfortably going the full length of the arena in shoulder-in, increase the difficulty by asking your horse for some forward and back in shoulder-in. The first few times you ask, be ready—with a clear indirect rein and strong leg on the inside and with a good half-halting rein on the outside—for him to say "OK" but then try to straighten his body.

Ride shoulder-in on a circle. Try a shoulder-in spiral-in and spiral-out. Or here's a challenging exercise that my mentor, Erich Bubbel, taught me: Stay in shoulder-in left the entire time you ride from F to B, turn left at B, turn left at E and ride from E to K.

## What if ...

■ You feel your horse trying to throw his haunches out, rather than bring his shoulders in? Hold his haunches with a stronger outside leg.

■ His shoulders stay on the track and only his head and neck come in? Make sure you're not just pulling his head and neck around (as I'm doing in the "Wrong" photo above). Then take a step back and review the easier movement of leg-yield on the rail (see the photo on page 23) to remind him that his shoulders can come in while his haunches stay out.

■ Your horse loses his even bend from poll to tail and so develops too much angle? Check to make sure your inside hand is looking toward your outside hip. Then immediately circle 10 meters to restore the correct bend from poll to tail and to remind him about bringing his outside fore up and in.

■ Your horse gets slower and slower? This is such a common problem that I've never known a horse to become more forward while learning shoulder-in. (In fact, if you know one, I'd like



## WRONG

I've pulled Cassiano's head and neck so far to the left that his nose is past the point of his shoulder: a real no-no at any time. As a result, he can't bring his shoulders in off the rail. Instead, he's leaning on his outside (right) shoulder, his chest is looking straight up the track and he's even a little bit haunches-in. You can also see that my rider position isn't helping: My hips are looking straight down the track but so are my shoulders.

to meet him!) That said, I am OK with your horse's slowing down a little bit to figure out the movement, but not so much that he falls behind your leg and the movement becomes more difficult. If

that happens, just circle and refresh him with some "forward," even if you have to post the trot or ride a bigger 12- or even 15-meter circle. Remember he must always respond by going forward. 🐾

A Colorado native who spent time riding hunters and jumpers as a teenager, **Leslie Webb** switched to dressage in 1978. During this time, she started working with U.S. Olympic Three-Day Eventing Coach Erich Bubbel and moved to California to train with him. "I was riding a lot of hotheaded and extremely athletic horses, and Erich and I had to come up with patterns that could communicate training precepts to them in a doable, non-confrontational way. Over the years, I came to realize that these patterns worked with all horses, not just hotheaded ones, so I refined and streamlined them until they developed into the training system I use today."

When Leslie began teaching, "I had to give my students clear, doable homework assignments with clear, concrete, step-by-step tools to guide them," she says. So she went back to the meticulous notebooks she kept during her time with Erich. That was the foundation for a series of articles that first ran in the pages of *Practical Horseman* and was later turned into the book, *Build a Better Athlete*, now in its 10th year of publication.

A 1995 Pan American Games team and individual silver medalist and multiple USEF, USDF and CDS award winner, Leslie continues to compete and train horses and students in Bakersfield, California.



Tamie Smith and Mai Baum traveled East to Virginia to compete in the 2015 Land Rover Great Meadow International Horse Trials.





# THE REAL DEAL

Missions, milestones and memories mark the ascent of eventer Tamra Smith.

By Kim F. Miller

**W**e're making memories!" is a rallying cry for West Coast eventer Tamra "Tamie" Smith. The mantra was on her mind not only as she headed

out of the cross-country start box last year on her way to several wins but also at the outset of six cross-country journeys that began in the wee hours of the morning at her Southern California base. On those trips, she logged more than 3,000 miles of highway or skyway travel on her way to accomplishing a three-fold mission: to make an indelible mark on the national eventing scene, to stake her claim in the sport's future and to come through for her many supporters.

Mission accomplished on all counts.

Tamie's 2015 was already stellar with three CIC\*\*\* wins in a row aboard Mai Baum, the 9-year-old German Sport Horse nicknamed Lexus: in July at Rebecca Farm in Kalispell, Montana; in early September at Copper Meadows in Ramona, California; and later that month at Plantation Field in Unionville, Pennsylvania. She also had many victories on up-and-coming mounts, including the Novice Horse and Preliminary Horse divisions at the 2015 U.S. Eventing Association's Nutrena American Eventing Championships last fall. Anita Nardine's 7-year-old Oldenburg gelding Favian won the former, and Judith McSwain's 6-year-old Holsteiner mare Fleece-works Royal won the latter and was then named 2015 USEA Preliminary Horse of the Year. Then in October, Tamie and Lexus, owned and campaigned through two-star level by student Alex Ahearn and Eric Markell, started in their first CCI together



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**Even though Mai Baum is now qualified for a CCI\*\*\*\*, Tamie plans to take her time developing him. "I don't want to do anything that would shake his confidence," she says.**



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**ABOVE:** Mai Baum's owners Alex Ahearn (center) and Ellen Ahearn congratulate Tamie after her victory at last fall's Fair Hill CCI\*\*\*, Mai Baum's first three-star.

**LEFT:** At the 2015 Nutrena USEA American Eventing Championships with Fleeceworks Royal, Tamie wore friend Heather Morris's cross-country colors in support of Heather's brother Dylan, who was fighting cancer.

at the Dutta Corp. Fair Hill International in Elkton, Maryland. There they led from their 38.5 dressage score on through the show-jumping timers.

Bookending the year were selections to U.S. Equestrian Federation's Eventing High Performance lists: In November 2014, she was named to the National High Performance list, which includes athletes considered competitive in domestic international-level competition and whom the USEF selection committee feels have future potential to be competitive anywhere in

the world. Last November, she made the more elite seven-rider World Class High Performance list of athletes with the ability to be competitive anywhere in the world. In December, Tamie received the \$30,000 Rebecca Broussard Developing Rider Grant and Lexus won the Overall Horse of the Year Award at the U.S. Eventing Association's Annual Meeting.

Of her cross-country travels, the 40-year-old rider from Temecula, California, says, "I had to go back East and do what I did. I had to show them, and me,

that I was good enough and not just with one horse. I had to show them that I'm a hard worker and that it's my desire to not just be the best rider in the USA, but to be the best rider in the world."

"The energy that Tamie exudes attracts a similar kind of energy and people to her," says Judith McSwain, a sponsor and owner of several horses over the years. "She has incredible drive and that transcends everything she does. She's talented and hard working. She's a good, kind, generous person and she loves, loves, loves her horses. She's the real deal."

## The First Milestone

The journey to the upper levels of eventing took several years, and Tamie sees clear milestones in her professional path.

The first was connecting with Allen Clarke, an Australian horseman based in Southern California who inspired a sea of change in her approach. Allen is known for starting youngsters and working with problem horses, one of whom Tamie brought to him in 2005.

"You are either training or untraining



## Old School Upbringing

The pride in Tamie's recounting of 2015's highlights mingles with disbelief over how close she's come to what she began dreaming of in 1984. She was watching Olympic eventing on TV and realized, "That's what I want to do!"

She had little idea what that entailed. "The blood, sweat, broken bones, the really good horses, the not-so-good horses, the broken-down trailer by the side of the road and the 'How am I going to pay for that broken-down trailer by the side of the road?' Tamie reflects with a smile. "I certainly had a false sense of what it took to become a top rider."

She and Heather Morris, now her business partner, grew up riding with Kim Scheid of Spring Creek Training in Temecula.

Surprisingly, Tamie was timid. "I didn't want to canter, I didn't want to jump," remembers the rider later recognized for her bold instincts. At Spring Creek, coddling was nonexistent. "We were raised with a 'get it done' attitude," Heather remembers. "The horse was not necessarily your best friend. Whatever you needed to do to get over the jump, you did it."

Kim Scheid recognized 8-year-old Tamie's natural abilities instantly. "Tamie might have told you that I was mean to her; that I picked on her," she laughs. "But she and Heather 'had it.' Consciously and being careful not to scare them, I pushed, pulled and guided them. Whenever they gave me more, I asked for more and they gave it."

Tamie's first pony, Pepper, "was a stinker," Kim relays. "Tamie never wanted to come off. She always made every effort to stay on and that built up her strength." She learned the upside of riding a runaway. "She learned to not clutch and pull and fight it, but to embrace it and ride them forward when they have a problem. I think that's one of the reasons she's so brave on cross country: She learned from the beginning that speed is fun."

Tamie continued to ride and dream as an amateur. She juggled riding with a desk-bound career and being a single mother to her now 19-year-old daughter, Kaylawna Smith, a 2014 North American Young Rider Championship eventer who now works for dressage trainer Niki Clarke. There were tough stretches, throughout which her horses "were my sanctuary," she explains. As an amateur in her 20s, Tamie recalls asking friend and mentor Chris Scarlett, "Do you think I'll ever be able to do a one-star? It seemed impossible."

Tamie turned professional in 2005 at the urging of her husband, Dave Smith. She reminds him of that fact when her life resembles that of a touring musician, on the road a lot and handling the highs, lows and unpredictabilities. Tamie's "rock" and "hero," Dave is a homicide detective so he understands the realities of ambitious and stressful yet rewarding career choices. When not

working, he's a familiar face on the West Coast eventing scene as a competition volunteer.

Though Tamie has been steadily rising to the top—she competed in the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event CCI\*\*\*\* in 2009 on Chaos Theory, she was a Nations Cup Team member in 2011 and she was an alternate for the 2011 and 2015 Pan American Games—too big for the breeches is an unlikely outcome for her. Judith McSwain recalls being at a Galway Downs event in Temecula with Tamie last year. Tamie had competed several horses and coached several students, yet wasn't too busy or tired when the call came for people to collect cross-country pinnys at the end of a long day.

Tamie calls Bea di Grazia "Mama B" and considers her, along with Bea's husband and course designer Derek di Grazia ("Papa D"), mentors. Bea sees Tamie naturally assuming that role for others.

"She is a good ambassador for the sport," Bea says. "She's made a lot of friends and learned a lot and is still always trying to educate herself. Tamie serves on several U.S. Eventing Association committees and usually shares a thoughtful assessment, good or bad, of proposed changes to the sport. She's a fresh new face in our sport and someone that helps keep everybody in it tuned up as well."

your horse every time you interact with him," is an Allen Clarke mantra, Tamie says. Fairness, clear communication, positive reinforcement, repetition and instilling the idea that "you are your horse's protector" are hallmarks of his methods. Tamie had been curious about various natural horsemanship methods, but it was Allen

who crystallized for her the idea that training must be driven by how horses think, not how humans think.

"I realized that he knew something I didn't know. I wanted to be good enough badly enough that I took all he said completely to heart," Tamie says. She spent a few years working intensely with him and

now incorporates what she learned in the training of all horses in her program. The methods comprise round-pen work that targets disengagement, submission and responsiveness to the aids, including body language and voice.

Tamie and those in her program use Allen's methods "like people use certain



**Tamie and Mai Baum on their way to a win in the 2015 Rebecca Farm CIC\*\*\* in Montana last July**

exercises to help them stay focused. If we sense that a horse is sort of 'out of himself,' it's time for round-pen

work to get him refocused," she explains.

At-liberty bridleless riding in the pen is part of the program. "We start first on the ground and teach the horses simple voice commands, then implement them with the rider," she explains. Especially for horses who are strong in the bit, the bridleless work builds responsiveness to voice, leg and weight aids, giving the rider control and the confidence that comes with it. "It was a pivotal point and a jump-start to a great foundation," Tamie says of Allen's influence.

The resulting deep level of connection with her horses became common ground as she began working with U.S. Eventing Coach David O'Connor, an advocate of natural-horsemanship methods, in 2013.

## **A Well-Used Grant**

The recipient of various training grants, Tamie describes the \$15,000 Rebecca Broussard Developing Rider Grant for the 2013 season as "a catapult."

"First, because it was a bunch of people saying, 'We think you have what it takes,'" Tamie says of the grant committee. She was methodical in determining how to use the funds. Studying other riders, especially the German victors at the 2012 London Olympics the previous summer, Tamie decided that "getting better on the flat and more technical in show jumping" should be focal points going forward.

A student of the sport, she believes that "to develop into a well-rounded rider, you have to go other places." Sometimes, that's geographically, like competing in the East. Sometimes it's tapping into expertise outside of the eventing world. For that, Tamie didn't have to travel far.

Tamie's base in Temecula is 10 minutes from show-jumping legend Susie Hutchison and an hour from jumping mentor Lane Clarke, Allen's son. It's also 45 minutes from San Diego-based





© KIM F. MILLER

dressage Olympian Steffen Peters, with whom Tamie has lessoned periodically to augment her everyday training with Niki Clarke (who is Allen's daughter-in-law). She's seen her scores in those formerly weaker phases improve accordingly. She's also competed at open dressage and jumping competitions, including a few weeks at the HITS Thermal hunter/jumper circuit in early 2015.

## Right Place At the Right Time

Moving to Tualata Creek Ranch in 2012 was another career catapult. Since first going pro in 2005 and starting her business, Next Level Eventing, Tamie had been comfortable at a lovely, but small property in Murrieta. It was far from the hub of equestrian activity that Temecula has become. She admits to vacillating between staying in her comfort zone or finding the bigger facility required to accommodate the scope of her ambitions.

The 42-acre Tualata Creek Ranch, owned by longtime reining and work-

ing cow horse enthusiasts Kay and Alan Needle, had been vacant when Tamie first saw it. Her working student Amy Fox, 20, came with her and declared, "You have to move here!"

"What do you know, you're only 20," was Tamie's knee-jerk reaction, but she kept listening and looking around. Seeing the shady, quiet, expansive property today, it's hard to imagine not grasping the possibilities right away. "It didn't look like this then," she explains. A sizeable investment of sweat equity by her Next Level Eventing team brought the property to its current state, and in the spring of 2012 Tamie moved in 10 horses.

Ranch highlights include an enormous covered arena where the USEF staged a second year of training sessions in January, big lawns, paddocks where most horses spend their days or nights, a dressage court with mirrors and conditioning tracks and hills. The program quickly quadrupled to its current 40-plus horses.

Tamie, a USEA ICP Level 4 Certified Instructor, envisions Tualata Creek

and the team assembled there as a Mecca for eventing. "Our predominate focus is to help the USA get back on top in eventing," she says. The vision leapt toward reality when Tamie's best friend since childhood and fellow eventer Heather Morris returned to California in 2014. Now Heather's Team Express combines with Niki Clarke's Dressage Unlimited and Tamie's Next Level Eventing to create a partnership and an effective launch pad for horses and riders.

In addition to Mai Baum and Fleece-works Royal's 2015 Horse of the Year honors, Heather's Charlie Tango was Intermediate Horse of the Year and Niki's Quincy was the U.S. Dressage Federation Fourth Level Horse of the Year. "We joke that East Coast riders have no idea there's anybody doing anything west of the Mississippi," Tamie says. "Here we are!"

Heather's homecoming was the happy byproduct of heartbreaking circumstances.

**Tamie with her close friend Heather Morris (left) and her head groom, Shannon McCormick (center).**



**Tamie's and Mai Baum's successful eventing season last year boosted her onto the USEF's World Class High Performance list.**

She had moved to Texas 14 years ago to ride with and then work for, Mike Huber.

She returned to

California to help her brother Dylan through his battle with stomach cancer. Tamie, Heather and Dylan had the family bonds of a shared upbringing, and accompanying Dylan in his fight for survival has been as much a part of Tamie's life as her remarkable ascent in the sport. She credits him with sharing his gift for "smelling the roses" and the inspiration of his tenacity.

Dylan's final days came as Fair Hill unfolded last October. Heather withdrew Charlie Tango and flew home to Dylan while Tamie stayed to carry his fighting spirit across the finish line, as Dylan would have wanted.

It was an extreme example of Tamie's ability to "just keep going," observes Judith. "In the face of everything that was going on and wanting to be home with Dylan and Heather, she dug deep and pulled it out. That's what she does."

## That Team Thing

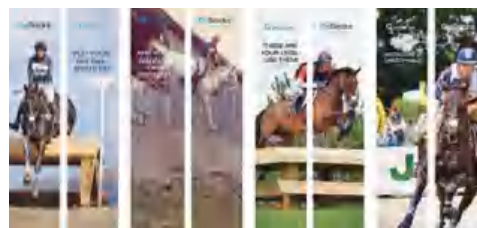
An emphatic assertion that all successes result from a team effort dominates any conversation with Tamie. The team includes her horses, friends, family, owners, sponsors, coaches, fans and fellow competitors. She's a prolific poster of social media and writer of old-fashioned thank-you note expressions of gratitude to those who've supported and inspired her. And the wording always suggests that every victory is a shared one. "No matter how busy you are, there's never an excuse not to recognize those who've been behind you."

It's part of her nature and a skill that's helped her get and keep an ever-growing



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list of owners, sponsors and supporters. Many owners started as students and got happily swept along into bigger roles. Ownership syndicates, with nonprofit status through the Professional Riders Organization, have helped Tamie stay well mounted with plenty of youngsters coming up the levels.

The sports marketing agency Athletux has been instrumental in the business side of her success. The company is run by friend and fellow rider Frankie Thieriot Stutes, whose Chatwin Tamie campaigned successfully at the two-star level while Frankie was on maternity leave.

Longtime USEF team selector Bea di Grazia noticed Tamie's "athletic ability and her tenacity and bravery" years ago. More recently, the "whole package" of Tamie's success is what stands out. "She's figured out the whole mental game and learned how to build a business, putting everything together in the best possible way that

makes everyone really enjoy the sport and get more out of their involvement."

The win streak this fall "would never have happened," Tamie says, without groom Shannon McCormick, who received the 2015 USEA Christine E. Stafford Eventing Groom Award. Assistant rider MacKenna Shea, newly on the USEF's Eventing 25 list, is equally key, as are three working students who help maintain a ship-shape stable.

"Details matter," Tamie says. "Attention to detail in everything translates to attention to detail when you're riding."

## Sweet '16?

Tamie's and Lexus' Fair Hill win earned them a plane ticket from The Dutta Corporation. Some assume Tamie will use it to fly him back to Kentucky next spring for the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event CCI\*\*\*\*. She admits that's tempting from the standpoint of 2016 Rio Olympic selec-

tion consideration, but it wouldn't be best for the horse so she's not doing it.

"It takes a very special horse to complete a CCI\*\*\* and any horse that does it comes out stronger and fitter and better," she says. It's time to let those lessons settle in. "Last fall, I asked him for hard, harder and hardest. He's a very careful horse, and I don't want to do anything that would shake his confidence. My focus is on developing him and doing what's right for him regardless of what's in the future for me." She expects Mai Baum to run a three-star in the spring and perhaps do his first four-star next fall.

The Olympics, of course, are staged at the three-star level and Tamie's talents and Mai Baum's consistently stellar performances have certainly made their mark on the powers that be along with the rest of the eventing community.

Rio or no, many more memories await for Team Tamie Smith. 🐾



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Carol "Hoffy" Hoffman and Avenue Blue, whom she shows in the Amateur-Owner division, are ready to step into the show ring. He has a gleaming coat, clean and well-fitting tack and saddle pad, and neat braids. Hoffy is dressed in clean, neat, well-fitting and conservative attire. This ensures that all of the judge's focus is on the horse, where it should be.





# SHOW-DAY TURNOUT

## TIPS

The manager of a top hunter/jumper barn, who also is a judge and competitor, explains how to make sure you and your horse shine when you step into the show ring.

**Story and Photos by Nancy Jaffer**

**Y**our horse is fit, your lessons have been right on point and your confidence level is high as you trot into the show ring. But did you forget something? Could that be dust on your boots? Is your saddle pad less than pristine? What about the gunk on your horse's bit?

Turnout—the way you and your horse look—may be the last thing you consider, but overlooking it is a mistake. “Turnout is what gives

**There are many aspects to aesthetically pleasing, safe turnout: Avenue Blue's martingale is adjusted properly and the strap between his legs is not dangerously looping. The saddle is sitting behind his withers so it doesn't make them sore and limit his shoulders' range of motion. The reins are over his head so Huffy can hold the entire length of them and the stirrups are run up so they can't get caught on anything.**





**Avenue Blue's neatly braided mane shows off his neck and makes him look elegant. The noseband sits just under his large cheek bone. The keepers are pinched so the cheekpieces won't get loose.**



**Hoffy recommends keeping your horse's braided tail neat with a bandage so he doesn't rub out the braids between classes.**

you the edge to be a winner. It's about attention to detail," says Carol "Hoffy" Hoffman, a U.S. Equestrian Federation R hunter and hunter seat equitation judge who also is a successful hunter exhibitor. "When I'm judging, I get an initial impression of the way the horse and rider are turned out, their attention to detail.

"I make a note of it, and it can be a tie-breaker. It's the overall picture—a winner looks like a winner." Good turnout demonstrates "respect for the sport, respect for the horse, respect for yourself and respect for the judge," she adds, noting that both the horse and rider are athletes.

The manager of Market Street in Frenchtown, New Jersey, where she is a partner and co-founder with Olympic show-jumping medalist Anne Kursinski, Hoffy has officiated at many of the country's biggest shows, including the National Horse Show and the Devon Horse Show. She previously worked with Patty Heuckeroth and Gene Cunningham, both members of the National Show Hunter Hall of Fame, and is respected for the meticulous way Market Street is run.

"I think people can ride better when they're turned out well because they feel better about themselves," she says. "Riding is such a mental game anyway."

Hoffy also contends that when a horse is turned out well, he performs better. Michael Matz always used to say that, too, she remarks.

While looks are important, good turnout goes beyond that. Hoffy explains point by point what to do to make sure tack fits and is adjusted properly, which ensures the safety of you and your horse. She also advises how to come up with an overall picture that is pleasing and correct for hunters and jumpers both at the show and in a clinic. Of course, first things first—always make sure your tack is in good repair, the leather supple, not cracked, and the stitching intact.

Before getting into turnout for specific disciplines, there are a few points that pertain to any horse-and-rider turnout, whether you are showing in hunters, equitation or jumpers:

- Your horse's coat needs to shine, which comes from good nutrition and lots of daily grooming.
- He should be trimmed, including his coronary bands, muzzle and ears so there are no stray hairs. If his coat is long, he should be clipped.
- The tack needs to be clean and conditioned, the bit and your spurs should be polished and your attire should be clean and well-fitting.
- Have an expert correctly fit the saddle and make sure to place it properly when you tack up. Nine times out of 10, the saddle is too far forward, creating sore withers and limiting your horse's range of shoulder motion. It needs to be just behind the withers.

## Hunters and Hunter Seat Equitation

Hunters and equitation classes are judged subjectively so when riding in them, you want to make a good first impression.

- Braid your horse's mane and tail neatly. Braiding started with a foxhunting tradition, designed so the horse's mane and tail would not catch on brambles. In the ring, it gives neat look that shows off the horse's conformation. For his mane, make sure there are enough braids so his neck looks elegant. If you can't braid, hire a braider and learn how to do it properly. A bad braid job is a distracting eyesore.
- Keep your horse's braided tail neat with a bandage so he doesn't rub out the braids between classes.

■ Make sure the cheekpieces on the bridle are properly pinched down so the keepers don't slide. Pinch the ends between your thumb and forefinger so they stay in place. If they slip, the cheekpiece may begin flapping, a distraction for you, your horse and the judge.

- Adjust the throatlatch so you are able to get four fingers between the leather and your horse's throat. It shouldn't be too tight, which is uncomfortable for the horse, or hanging too low, which can distract the judge.
- Adjust the noseband so it lies just below the maxilla, which is the big bone on your horse's cheek.
- With the help of your trainer, properly





**WRONG:** The browband is crooked, the noseband is too low, the bit is too high and the keepers are not pinched down, leaving loose, distracting ends. The martingale strap is dangerously loose and the stirrup leathers could get caught on something.



Before getting your horse ready for a jumper class, organize and lay out your tack, from saddle and belly guard to ear bonnet, boots and saddle pad.



**Motto** is a jumper and doesn't have to be braided like a hunter, but his mane is neatly pulled and **Hoffy** is dressed as neatly and appropriately as when she rides in the hunter divisions.



Rectangular saddle pads are acceptable in the jumper ring. This one is adjusted so the saddle is sufficiently above the center of the pad and the cantle does not rest on the seam, which could make the horse's back sore.

adjust the standing martingale, which has one strap that is looped through the noseband under the horse's jaw. Its placement is different for every horse. The martingale is on the long side if you can raise it with your hand and it touches your horse's throat. At that length, it could flap around when he is jumping, which is distracting.

■ Correctly adjust the two keepers at the end of the martingale or breastplate strap that runs between your horse's legs.

The first keeper on that strap should be slid forward, up against the buckle, while the second keeper is slid back against the girth. Be careful that strap stays flat against your horse's skin and doesn't loop because his shoe can get caught in it when he's jumping. In the worst-case scenario, he will not be able to unfold his legs and could crash.

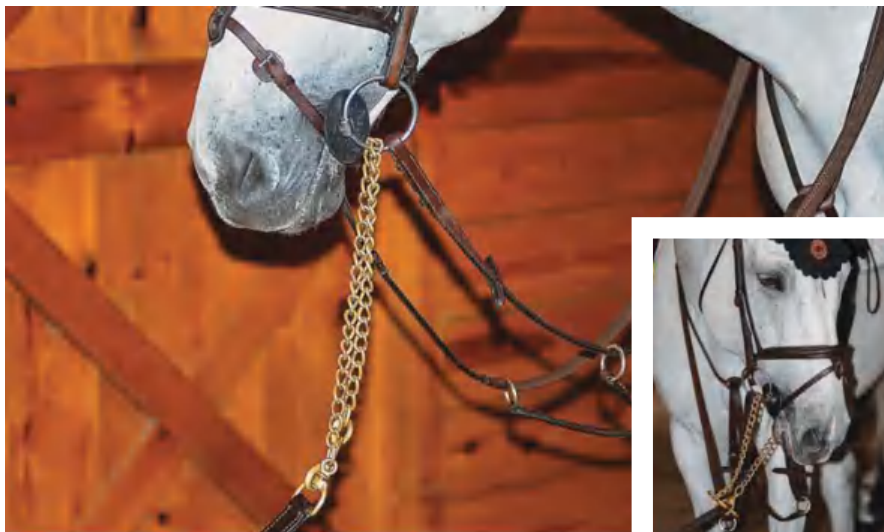
■ Use a well-fitting, white fleece saddle pad, appropriate for hunter and equitation

classes, that just rims the saddle so only about 2 inches show. After putting the saddle on the pad, pull the pad up into the pommel so it clears the withers and doesn't press on the horse's back.

■ Whenever you are leading or standing with your tacked-up horse, bring the reins over his head so you can hold the entire length of them and have more control. Don't loop them over his neck as they are when you're mounted. Also keep your



When putting on jumper boots, start with them high on the cannon bone, then slide them down to where they fit comfortably over the horse's fetlock.



**WRONG:** To lead a jumper wearing a running martingale, if you loop the shank through the bit and clip it back to the bottom ring of the chain (above), it creates an opening where the horse can put his leg. This also can happen if you run the shank through both sides of the bit and clip it to the bottom ring (inset). For safety, clip the lead to one side of the bit.

stirrups run up, instead of down, until you are ready to mount. If the horse reaches back to go after a fly, the bit could get caught in stirrups if they're down.

## Jumpers and Jumping Seat Equitation

Though jumpers are judged objectively, rather than subjectively, turnout is just as important for that discipline as well, Hoffy says. Proper turnout "raises the level. Look at the top riders—they present their horses and themselves perfectly." Whether you're trying for a spot on a Nations' Cup squad or international team or just riding in a local show, people notice and admire a horse and rider who look sharp. Team selectors and "people who count notice attention to detail—the proper way of doing things—whether it's how your tack fits or how your horse is turned out. It says a lot about you," Hoffy points out.

■ If a horse isn't braided, don't let his mane flop to both sides, which looks messy. To train it, get elastic bands at a tack shop and with the mane wet, braid it on the right side and leave it in for two days only. Longer than two days could cause the hair to break off at the root.

To maintain the horses' manes at Market Street, they are brushed every day

with wet rice-root brushes.

Make sure the mane is short and tidy. If the mane is too long, it can get caught in the reins.

■ As with hunters, make sure the regular noseband is beneath the maxilla, doubly important when using a flash noseband. If the regular noseband sits too low, the flash will be too low and cut off the horse's air.

■ A running martingale, which is used for jumpers and is less restrictive than a standing martingale, has two straps with rings on the end that slip through the reins. The length is personal preference, but you can figure out an acceptable length by holding up the straps when they are not attached to the reins to see if they reach the withers. You can, however, go shorter but be careful not to overdo it.

■ When you use a running martingale while you're standing with your horse, make sure the reins are over his head, which is the opposite of how you handle the reins when using a standing martingale or no martingale. Attach a lead shank with a chain that is polished, not dull or rusted.

■ Rein stops, which prevent the running martingale rings from sliding up to the horse's mouth and perhaps getting caught on the bit, should be adjusted so they are 4 to 6 inches from the bit; the exact

amount is a matter of personal preference.

■ Re-cover rubber reins when they are worn or sticky. These reins give you a better grip when the rubber is fresh, and if they are sticky, you can't get a proper grip because they will stick to your gloves.

■ If you are using a rectangular saddle pad, which is acceptable in the jumper ring where it can bear a logo and carry a number, make sure its middle seam is centered under the pommel and gullet and that the saddle is sufficiently above the pad so the cantle does not rest on the seam, making the horse's back sore.

■ Make sure your stirrups are polished, not dull or rusty. More important, they must be large enough to enable your foot to easily slip out of them if you fall off so you can get away from the horse and don't risk being dragged.

■ Buy properly fitting bell boots that are just short of the ground when the horse is standing still. Don't buy bell boots that are too big around the rim or too long. Some people prefer them that way because they're easier to pull on, but there is a risk the horse will step on them. If it takes some effort to put them on, they will protect the bulbs of the heel properly and keep the horse from pulling a shoe. Pull-on bellboots have a better chance of stay-



ing on than those that fasten with Velcro®.

■ Make sure the bell boots are intact before you put them on. If they look like someone took a bite out of them, the appearance is seedy.

■ Properly fitting shin boots need to be low enough to protect the entire tendon and reach to the bottom of the fetlock. Often, however, they're adjusted too low, interfering with flexion of the fetlocks. Start out by putting them high on the cannon bone, then move them down until they're in the right place, comfortably over the fetlock, before fastening them.

■ An ear bonnet should be straight between the horse's eyes and the ears should fit neatly. The bonnet should not be bunched under the crownpiece, and the ears should not be too big, so he looks like Eeyore, or so they fold over at the tips.

■ Attach the lead shank to only one side of the bit so it doesn't loop. If you run it through both sides and then clip it to the bottom loop of the chain, it creates an opening into which a horse could put his leg should he drop his head to rub his nose on his cannon bone.

## Tips for the Rider

■ Riding boots that aren't high enough look hokey. When the leather at the ankle drops and wrinkles, the boots should just cover the bone on the outside of your knee. At the other extreme, boots that are too high can fold and look sloppy. Today, you don't necessarily need custom boots to be well-dressed because there are many good off-the-rack boots to fit a variety of leg shapes, sizes and heights.

■ Trim spur straps if they are too long. You don't want more than an inch of strap after you put it through the buckle. Turning spur straps under the buckle to shorten them doesn't look good.

■ Jacket length can be about mid-fanny or go to the bottom of your derriere when you're standing up. It's your preference, but the jacket should not be so long that it gets caught on the cantle.

■ Make sure the jacket is big enough and doesn't gap to reveal your shirt between the buttons.



**Before entering the ring, have someone wipe the slobber from your horse's mouth and dust your boots, including the soles. By paying attention to all of these small details, you'll impress the judge from the start with your horsemanship skills.**

■ If you're showing informally or at a clinic, wear a neat polo shirt or other collared shirt tucked in to your breeches. If you can't tuck in your shirt, make sure it's short enough that it doesn't get caught on the cantle.

■ Women should not wear anything low-cut that shows cleavage.

■ Stay away from hooded sweatshirts—they flop around if the hood is down or cut off peripheral vision if the hood is up.

## Before Entering the Ring

Have a helper:

■ Check that the keepers are still secure.

■ Wipe off your horse's mouth.

■ Dust off your boots, including the soles.



**For a clinic, you want your horse to be clean and your tack to be tidy and well fitting. You should be dressed in conservative attire and wear a collared shirt that is tucked in.**

By paying attention to these details, you will let the judge know that you are a serious competitor who cares for her horse and has entered the ring prepared to show off her horsemanship skills. 🐾

*For more about attire fit and grooming tips, go to [www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com](http://www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com).*



# EARNING THE TRUST OF A THOROUGHBRED

A trainer shares how he transformed his racehorse into the freestyle division winner at the 2015 Thoroughbred Makeover.

**By Tik Maynard ■ Photos by Megan Stapley**

**T**he Thoroughbred, some believe, finds it easier to run than to walk. I set out to prove them wrong with Remarkable 54. He is a horse who can gallop, but he can also stand, walk quietly, trot and canter. His jump is easy and his playfulness makes me smile.

I found Remarkable in May 2015 with the idea of competing him in the Retired Racehorse Project's Thoroughbred Makeover and National Symposium the following October at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington. I'd wanted to compete in the Makeover since watching Olympic eventer Phillip Dutton win it in 2014.

The 2015 event was open to tattooed racehorses who had not started second career training before January of the same year. Each horse could compete in one or two of 10 featured disciplines. At the event's end, one of the horses would be crowned "American's Most Wanted Thoroughbred."

I planned to enter Remarkable in the eventing and freestyle disciplines. The eventing consisted of dressage and a short jumping course outside. Half the jumps were show jumps and half were cross-country jumps. In the freestyle, competitors crafted a six-minute routine that highlighted their horses' strengths.

I announced in June that Remarkable and I planned to win. He had everything I look for in a horse: the gaits, the jump, the brain, the heart. So why not aim high?

Remarkable retired from the track in 2014 with The Jockey Club name Mr. Pleasantree. Now 5 years old, he had raced 20 times in Phoenix, Arizona, and won four, but it's doubtful his heart was ever truly in it—"he would rather eat the turf than run on it," said Reed Zimmer, DVM, his first owner off the track. Dr. Zimmer sold







Tik Maynard's training regimen, focused on trust and horsemanship, helped his horse Remarkable 54 win the freestyle division at the 2015 Thoroughbred Makeover and National Symposium.





**ABOVE:** Tik entered Remarkable in the eventing section since the gelding had everything he looked for in a horse: the gaits, the jump, the brain and the heart.

**LEFT:** Tik is drawn to Remarkable's athletic physique and loves his "classic head and eye of a handsome, old-fashioned racehorse."

the horse to his girlfriend, who sold him to trainer Liz Millikin, who told my wife about him, who told me about him. He is a tall horse with the classic head and eye of a handsome, old-fashioned racehorse.

We changed his name in honor of a special horse my father owned when he was about my age. The suffix 54 is to promote Liz. (Many sales barns add a distinctive word or number to the horse's name in the hope that the horse will go on to reflect well on their business.)

As training with Remarkable began with me in New Jersey, I thought ahead to where I wanted him to end up, not just in six months but also in six years. The farther ahead I think, the more attention I pay to the foundation of training so my training pyramid won't topple over. One of the hardest parts of training is knowing when to back off and when to forge ahead, and it was no different with Remarkable. I started to develop a plan for him that revolved around three concepts.

## Concept 1: Start from A Point of Success

The first concept I followed was "Start From a Point of Success Rather Than a Point of Failure." As my horses try to figure something out, I don't want them to feel frustrated or wrong. I would rather back up to a simpler exercise until they figure it out. This applies to many situations, from starting a young horse to training dressage to jumping.

With Remarkable, one goal was that he would be able to stay calm and focused on me in front of a crowd in a main area with lots of music and movement because I knew we would have to face that at the Makeover. What I *didn't* do right off the bat was go into a crowd and work until he paid attention.

During the first months, I would ask for calm and focus but only in situations where he could easily give them to me. Then I would slowly take him out to places where there were more distractions. He

got better and better around other horses, people and noise. We went to four horse trials on the East Coast. We did a small demonstration at Bucks County Horse Park in Pennsylvania. Each time I could push a little more, but I was still careful to train rather than test what I was doing.

Another example of this concept was in our jumping. I wanted Remarkable to be able to jump bridleless so I could show off his rideability at the Makeover. But I started jumping in a bridle and worked on communication. Could we easily go? Could we jump, then easily stop? Could we easily turn? Did he *understand*?

Next could I ride him in just a neck strap? Could I still canter, halt, turn? Could he still pay attention outside? In the wind?

When the training went too fast, Remarkable let me know. With most Thoroughbreds, it is easy to read their anxiety simply by how much they want to move. We then returned to a situation where we were successful and started again there. I



## Believing in a Mission

At the same time that Remarkable and I were preparing for the 2015 Thoroughbred Makeover and National Symposium, Stuart Pittman, president of the Retired Racehorse Project, and his team, were preparing to host it.

In its third year, the Makeover is a national gathering of farms, organizations and trainers interested in transitioning former racehorses into successful off-track careers. In addition to the competition, there were 10 educational seminars and a Makeover Marketplace that presented Thoroughbreds for sale or adoption and a sponsor fair.

The Makeover initially accepted 350 horses into the competition in early 2015 and then started a wait list. In the end, almost 200 competed. "Many were sold before the event or their trainers chose to keep them home because they felt they weren't ready to compete," Stuart said. "We're collecting data



**Stuart Pittman (right), the mastermind behind the Retired Racehorse Project, has helped countless former racehorses transition into successful off-track careers.**

on how many of the original horses were sold, still in training or injured."

I asked Stuart how his team selected the 10 disciplines to be included in the Makeover competition. He said they "chose disciplines

in which Thoroughbreds are used and where their potential market is great."

This year each horse was allowed to enter two disciplines, and I competed Remarkable 54 in the eventing and the freestyle. In the eventing, which had 39 horses, we finished fifth. Judges looked for upper-level potential, harmony and trainability. In the freestyle, which had 25 horses, we were awarded first place. Stuart's vision for

the freestyle was "to bring in trainers who do something less traditional."

The top three horses from each division returned on Sunday for the finale. These 30 horses performed again for the judges, and America's Most Wanted Thoroughbred was named at the end. The winner was Soar, a beautiful gray mare, owned and ridden by Lindsey Partridge of Ontario, Canada.

Stuart and his team believe in their mission. He is a lifelong horse trainer and the eighth generation of his family to live on Dodon Farm in Davidsonville, Maryland. He is easily likeable, and his enthusiasm for Thoroughbreds is contagious. His team wants to give these horses, and their owners, a voice.

"Thoroughbreds are second to Quarter Horses by population in this country," Stuart says. "The American Horse Council estimates that there are 450,000 Thoroughbreds outside of racing in America. That is probably 150,000 proud owners of OTTBs. [Some owners own more than one Thoroughbred.] These people have never had a national gathering, a magazine

or an association. That's why Retired Racehorse Project and its Off-Track Thoroughbred Magazine and Thoroughbred Makeover are so popular. It's all a no-brainer. Like a great horse, it just takes a bit of nurturing."

Stuart is already planning for next year's Makeover, and he is anticipating a lot more entries: "Don't be surprised if we start a day earlier to fit in more competitors and more educational demonstrations," he says. "The application process this year is likely to start with trainer approval. Once trainers are approved, they will identify the eligible horse they will train. The reason for this is twofold. We expect over 1,000 applications and we don't think we can handle more than 350 or so horses this year. Rather than screen eligible horses we will screen trainers. We want excellence and we want diversity. We want professionals, amateurs and juniors in each sport, but we want the best of each category that we can get."

I asked Stuart if he could have any rider enter this competition whom would he choose? Stuart replied: "I'm greedy so here's a list: McLain Ward, Robert Dover, Buck Brannaman, William Fox-Pitt, Nacho Figueras and everyone else who is at the pinnacle of horse sports. I'd like to see all these superstars on impeccably trained Thoroughbreds but for an unknown teenager from nowhere to blow them all away in the finale with a performance that epitomizes the horse-human connection and launches the career of another great horse trainer."

For more information about the 2016 Thoroughbred Makeover and National Symposium, which will be in Lexington, Kentucky, October 27–30, go to [www.retiredracehorseproject.org](http://www.retiredracehorseproject.org).—Tik Maynard



**ABOVE:** Remarkable moved in unison with Tik at the Makeover, even without a lead rope or halter.

**ABOVE LEFT:** One of Tik's goals was to be able to ride Remarkable bridleless at the Makeover.



**LEFT:** Remarkable enjoyed a bucking spree when he was first at liberty during the Makeover, but he never took his eyes off Tik or lost their connection.

Not only does each horse stand untied where he is placed, but he does it with relaxation and understanding, his head low and mouth salivating.

### Concept 3: Make the Whole World Neutral

The third concept I followed was "Make the Whole World Neutral."

Every horse is born with innate motivations. They are drawn to open spaces, other horses, water, food and play. They are curious. They don't like predatory acts. They tend not to like things that move quickly, erratically or toward them. They are scared of sudden loud noises, especially new ones. Wind in the branches? Probably danger.

Once the horse enters the human's world, we start to influence those likes and dislikes. Whereas a feral horse is scared of humans and barns, he can quickly associate it with food and comfort. I try to look at everything in the horse's world from his point of view. Objects push them away, draw them closer or are neutral.

When Remarkable was scared of a water crossing, I made it neutral by offering him food when he walked up to it. When he would rather be in the grassy paddock than with me, I made it neutral by doing some of the harder work in the paddock and then bringing him to me for a rest.

tried to set him up to succeed.

A horse does not spook or show evasions for no reason. There is always a reason. The difficult part can be figuring out the reason, then helping your horse be OK with that before advancing. If the problem is not addressed, tension builds up, like steam in a kettle until all it takes is a whisper for the kettle to boil over.

In the five months I had to prepare, it wasn't until the last two weeks that we actually tried to jump with no bridle.

### Concept 2: The Olympics Of Everything

There is an Olympics for dressage, eventing and show jumping, but what would the Olympics of saddling be? What would be the four-star of trailer loading?

Imagine a World Cup for ground-tying:

And he can do it with horses galloping around and crowds screaming.

What about the Burghley of lead-ing: Each horse stays with his partner with no lead rope or halter. He stops when his partner stops and goes when his partner goes. They turn in unison and stop together, just as a mare and foal might.

Before Remarkable and I left for the 12-hour trailer ride to the Kentucky Horse Park, we could walk and run with no halter. He could ground-tie and wait for me patiently. Trailer loading? Not a problem.

Trying to be the best at such basic skills gave Remarkable and me a concrete foundation that I knew would serve us well. At a major competition, there will always be the unexpected, and the stronger a horse's basics skills, the easier it is to deal with new experiences.



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**At the end of their successful Makeover performance, Tik stood up on Remarkable's back and waved to the crowd.**

Once the whole world was neutral, I could shift his interest by adding the tiniest amount of leg or by giving him the smallest treat. It was like having an hourglass

that was balanced equally and all I had to do was shift one grain of sand to adjust his interest and movement. That, of course, is a lifelong pursuit.

## Concepts in Action

In the 2015 Makeover's freestyle, there were 25 entrants. Riders had six minutes to show off their horses however they saw fit. Acts included costumes, castles, flaming rings of fire and obstacle courses. There were blindfolded driving horses and bowing trail horses. Trainers had the option to talk during their demonstration, have music playing or a combination of both.



### ***Riding Through Thick and Thin: Make Peace with Your Body and Banish Self-Doubt — In and Out of the Saddle by Melinda Folse***

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I planned my performance to be simple. There were to be as few props as possible. I wanted it to be about Remarkable and our partnership. When the rider before me finished, I took off Remarkable's halter and prepared to enter the ring. I waited for the music to start, and I hoped he would follow me in.

The day before the freestyle we'd been allowed to enter the arena and walk around. Remarkable shied away from every banner on the rail. I asked Rick, my father, and Emily, my assistant, to walk around the outside of the ring and stop at every banner with a carrot.

So during the performance, when the music started and the judges picked up their pens, I knew that he wasn't scared of the banners anymore. Of course, that didn't mean he wasn't going to be afraid of something else. I had only our training to keep him with me as we hopefully played in the arena together.

We entered the main arena shoulder to shoulder. We looked around—the crowd was a lot to take in. We started to trot. We turned. We stopped. The people started to disappear and blur until it was just the two of us in the building.

The first three minutes, I was on the ground and he was at liberty. He ran and he bucked, but he kept an eye on me and he kept coming back. The second three minutes I rode with no bridle. We galloped around the ring, but we walked as well. We jumped and we halted.

We were alone as the music stopped when the six minutes had passed. I looked around. People were clapping. I looked at Remarkable and he looked back at me. I stood up on his back and waved. Then he got a carrot, and we walked out of the arena together. 🐾

*Eventer and natural horsemanship advocate Tik Maynard spent six years on the Cana-*

*dian National Team competing in the modern pentathlon, which includes riding, pistol shooting, fencing, swimming and running. He competed at the 2007 Pan American Games, three World Championships and 11 World Cups before focusing on eventing. He was long-listed for the Canadian Eventing Team for the 2012 London Olympics and currently is long-listed for the national team. He was a working student for eventers David and Karen O'Connor and Ingrid Klimke, German dressage trainer Johann Hinneemann and natural horseman and cutting trainer Bruce Logan. He also worked as an assistant trainer for show jumper Anne Kursinski. Married to eventer Sinead Halpin, Tik conducts eventing and natural horsemanship clinics throughout the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. Last December, he spoke at USEA's Annual Meeting about "How Horses Learn." For more, go to [www.tik.ca](http://www.tik.ca). To watch a video of his and Remarkable's winning freestyle performance, go to [www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com](http://www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com).*



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# DECIPHERING LAMINITIS

New research on a devastating disorder is leading treatment advances and prevention.

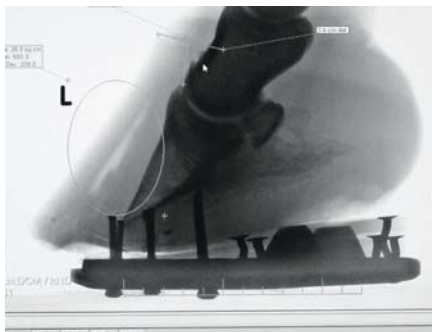
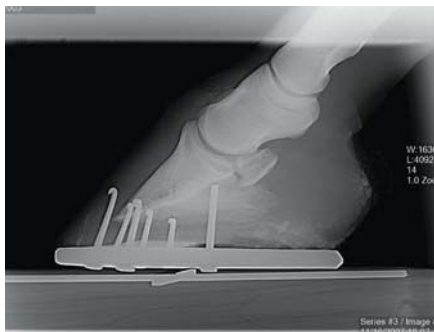
**By Elaine Pascoe with James Belknap, DVM, PhD, DACVS**

It's dinnertime, but your horse isn't pacing his stall or waiting at his feed bucket. He's planted in a corner with his front feet parked forward, shifting his weight from one to the other. When you check his front hooves, they feel warm. He's showing signs of laminitis, a potentially devastating disorder in which the bond between the hoof wall and the main bone of the foot weakens or gives way.

Laminitis can end your horse's career or cause such severe, unrelenting pain that euthanasia is the only choice. The statistics are grim. Surveys show that this disease affects about 1 percent of all U.S. horses at any given time and leads to death or euthanasia in about 5 percent of cases. Its victims have included renowned racehorses, backyard ponies and every equine type between.

Veterinarians have wrestled for years with questions about how laminitis develops and how it should be treated. Now, thanks to an international research effort, they're beginning to get answers. "There is progress on all fronts," reports James Belknap, DVM, PhD, DACVS. A professor of equine surgery at the Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Belknap is on the front lines of the fight against laminitis. In this article, he explains how research is leading to advances in treatment and prevention.

**BELOW LEFT: A radiograph shows the normal position of the coffin bone. BELOW RIGHT: In the X-ray, the circle indicates laminar separation and the coffin bone has rotated.**



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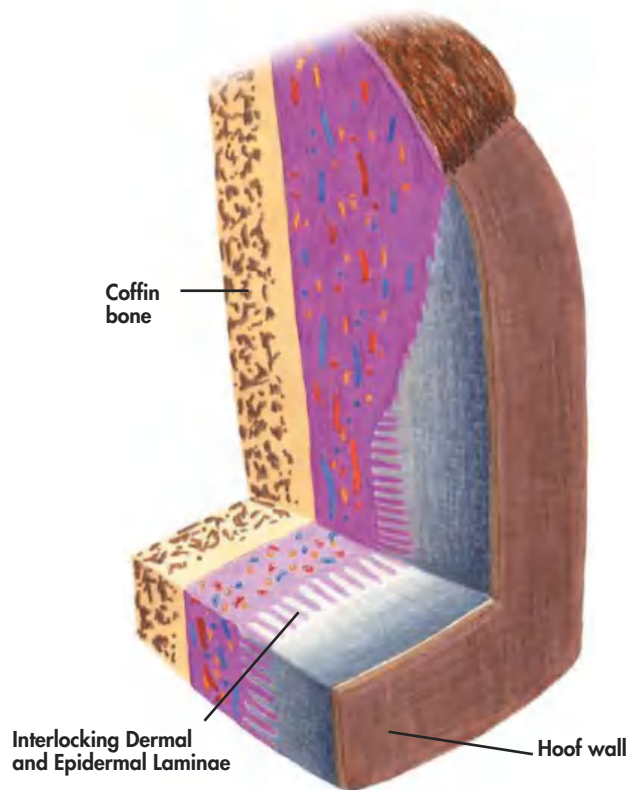
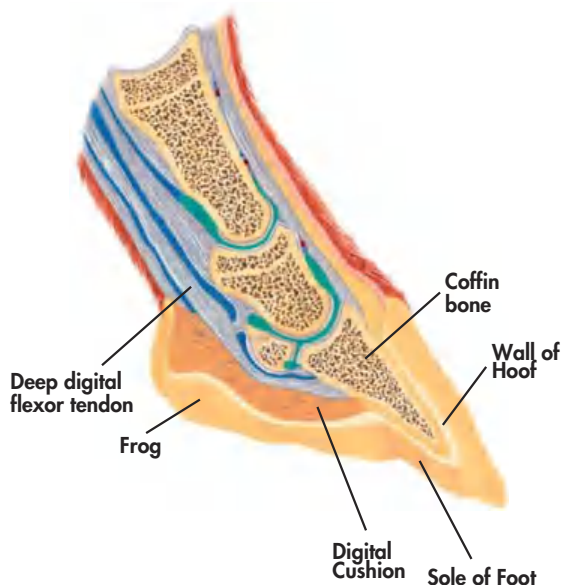






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A horse suffering from laminitis often stands with his front feet parked out in front and his hind feet farther under his body than normal, trying to find a comfortable place to put his weight.



In a normal foot, the coffin bone (distal phalanx) is suspended behind the hoof wall by laminae. Inner (dermal) laminae on the bone side mesh like interlocking fingers with outer (epidermal) laminae on the inside of the hoof wall. The bond formed by the laminae suspends the entire weight of the horse as it comes down the leg and is carried out to the hoof wall.



Compared to the hoof trimming from a normal hoof, a horse's laminitic hoof shows separation of the inner and outer laminae as it grows out.

## Inside Story

Laminitis is more common in the front feet (usually both), but the hind feet can be hit, too. These are the classic signs:

- A strong, bounding digital pulse. Find it at the pastern, just below the outer side of the fetlock joint. Normally the pulse here is faint, almost undetectable. A strong pulse indicates inflammation, and a

bounding pulse in both front feet is often the first sign of laminitis.

- Heat in the hoof, another sign of inflammation.

- Lameness. The horse may move stiffly and especially resent being turned in a tight circle, or he may be reluctant to move at all.

- An odd stance. He may stand with his front feet parked out in front and his hind feet farther under his body than normal. When all four feet are involved, the stance may be "camped out" (forelimbs farther forward and hind limbs farther back).

- Paddling. The horse may shift his weight constantly from one foot to the other, trying to find a comfortable place to put his weight.

One reason laminitis so often ends badly is that internal damage begins long before these signs show up. In a normal foot the main bone—the coffin bone, also called the distal phalanx—is suspended behind the hoof wall by delicate accordion-like structures called laminae. Inner (dermal) laminae on the bone side mesh like interlocking fingers with outer (epidermal) laminae on the inside of the hoof wall.

The bond formed by the laminae sus-

pends the entire weight of the horse as it comes down the bony column of the leg and is carried out to the hoof wall. When this vital bond fails in laminitis, the coffin bone can tear loose from the hoof wall. The bone presses down on soft tissues below, causing excruciating pain and sometimes even punching through the sole.

Depending on the severity of the case and hoof conformation, three types of coffin-bone displacement can occur:

- Rotation: The laminae at the toe detach, allowing the tip of the coffin bone to rotate down. The deep digital flexor tendon pull on the bone encourages rotation.

- Symmetrical sinking: The laminae are severely affected around the entire foot, letting the entire coffin bone sink toward the ground.

- Medial or asymmetrical sinking: More rarely, the laminae give way on the inside or outside of the foot so the coffin bone sinks to that side.

It's long been known that some horses are prone to laminitis and that certain events—severe colic, acute infections, gorging on spring grass or sweet feed, carrying excessive weight on one leg—can trigger an attack. The hows and whys have been



much less clear, but researchers are starting to find out. The critical events take place at a microscopic level in the foot, along a thin layer of connective tissue called the basement membrane

The basement membrane lies between the inner laminae and a layer of cells (*dermal basal epithelial cells*) on the hoof side. Lamellar attachment depends entirely on microscopic protein complexes called *hemidesmosomes* that connect the basal epithelial cells to the membrane. "These same protein complexes bind the basal epithelial cells of our skin to underlying connective tissue," Dr. Belknap says. "The difference is that our skin doesn't have to support a thousand pounds of weight." Skin cells must be able to detach and migrate in events such as wound healing, he adds. In humans, research shows, they accomplish this through cell-signaling pathways that regulate the production or breakdown of hemidesmosomes and by producing enzymes that can break down tissue in the basement membrane.

Why does this esoteric science matter? "Veterinary researchers now consider it likely that the many different conditions that result in laminitis do so by affecting the regulation of the hemidesmosome attachment," Dr. Belknap says. If the pathways that lead to damage can be pinned down, perhaps they can be blocked.

## Laminitis Three Ways

There are three main types of laminitis, Dr. Belknap says. "All three follow the same course to a degree, but there are differences in the way they develop."

**Sepsis-related** laminitis begins with the absorption of bacterial

toxins. The source of the toxins may be an infected organ (the lungs in pneumonia or the uterus in metritis or a retained placenta). More often, it's a GI tract compromised by loss of blood supply, as in colon torsion, or by inflammation, as in grain overload or colitis. Then bacterial toxins pass through the intestine wall and set off a system-wide response, activating white blood cells that release a flood of substances called inflammatory mediators. The result is similar to severe sepsis in humans, in which overwhelming inflammation can lead to organ failure. In horses, inflammation is greatest in the laminae.

There are still questions about exactly how the damage occurs, but a picture is emerging. "The severe inflammation in the laminae likely sets up a cascade of events

resulting not only in the disruption of the cellular signaling in the lamellar basal epithelial cells, affecting their adhesion properties, but also the release of enzymes that break down the basement membrane,"

Dr. Belknap says.

## Endocrine-related

laminitis takes a slightly different course. Horses with equine metabolic syndrome and equine Cushing's disease (pituitary pars intermedia dysfunction) are at high risk for this form.

Both conditions involve insulin resistance, a condition that makes it hard to process carbohydrates in feed. Insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas, allows cells in the body to regulate glucose levels and to convert glucose to energy. In insulin resistance, the cells don't use insulin properly so the horse must produce more insulin to



**ABOVE:** When a horse gorges himself on sweet feed, it can compromise his GI tract and lead to sepsis-related laminitis.

**RIGHT:** It's long been known that certain events, including gorging on spring grass, can trigger laminitis.

**BELOW:** A classic sign of a horse with laminitis is a strong, bounding digital pulse just below the outer side of the fetlock joint.



PHOTO AT RIGHT/ABOVE © STACEY NIEDROW-WIGMORE

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**ABOVE:** To take strain off the laminae, remove the horse's shoes, which put most of his weight on the hoof wall. Support the sole by taping on foam pads or commercial supports.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** Any exercise could cause the laminae of a laminitic horse to give way, so keep him in a stall. Bed it deeply to provide cushion and encourage him to lie down as much as possible.

**LEFT:** Research shows that icing limbs affected by laminitis continuously for 48 to 72 hours to induce hypothermia can significantly reduce damage in sepsis-related laminitis. A new ice boot developed by Soft-Ride may help with the labor-intensive work of keeping a horse's feet and lower-limbs submerged in crushed ice around the clock.

ing limb—and the attack is often sudden and severe. “The horse can seem fine for several weeks and then suddenly suffer catastrophic failure,” Dr.

Belknap says. It's estimated that half of horses who develop this type of laminitis are euthanized.

Work from both Dr. Belknap's lab and Australian researcher Andrew van Eps indicates that circulation in the supporting limb is a key factor. When blood flow to the foot is restricted, cells are starved for oxygen, a condition called hypoxia, and the laminae can be affected. Drs. van Eps and Belknap have both recently found evidence of hypoxia in laminar tissue of horses with supporting-limb laminitis, but Dr. Belknap says that his collaborator in Australia has really moved the field forward with his findings. “Van Eps showed that it's not the pressure of excessive weight-bearing so much as lack of movement that causes hypoxia in these horses,” Dr. Belknap says. “As soon as the limb moves, circulation to the foot is restored and more oxygen reaches the tissues.”

However it starts, laminitis is always an emergency.

move glucose into cells.

“These horses develop incredibly high levels of circulating insulin,” Dr. Belknap notes. And while other factors may be involved, insulin appears to be the driving force in this type of laminitis. Recent work by Dr. Chris Pollitt's Australian Equine Laminitis Research Unit suggests that excess insulin may activate a process called growth-factor signaling in the laminae. This disrupts not only the adhesion properties but also the cytoskeletons of the cells so the cells lose their normal structure and stretch. “It's usually not a crash-and-burn event as occurs in sepsis-related and supporting-limb laminitis,” says Dr. Belknap. “It's commonly more insidious.”

**Supporting-limb** laminitis affects horses who are laid up with severe leg injuries, like fractures. The horse spares the injured limb by putting more weight on another, usually the opposite limb. The longer this goes on, the greater the risk that laminitis will develop in the support-

## What to Do

Early, aggressive treatment can limit damage and may save your horse's life, so call your veterinarian immediately if you see signs. If you know the horse experienced a triggering event—he broke into the feed room and stuffed himself with grain, say—call even before you see signs. In septic laminitis there's typically a lag of 24 to 72 hours between the triggering event and the first signs, but the inflammatory response begins almost immediately. The faster you can halt it, the better your horse's chances will be.

No single treatment works in every case of laminitis, but researchers are learning more about what's likely to work best in each of the three types.

**Make it cold:** Standing the horse in ice water is an old-time remedy, but now veterinarians have ramped up the treatment and discovered how helpful cryotherapy can be. The new protocol calls for icing affected limbs continuously for 48 to 72 hours straight to induce hypothermia. You couldn't tolerate this, but your horse can, and research shows that it can significantly reduce damage in sepsis-related laminitis.

“Cryotherapy is protective when it's



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## What's Next?

Laminitis has claimed high-profile victims. The best known in recent years may be the 2006 Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro, who fractured his right hind leg in the Preakness Stakes and was euthanized eight months later after developing supporting-limb laminitis. Such cases have helped spur efforts to find better treatments.

Laminitis research is ongoing at over a dozen universities and equine centers in the United States, Australia, Britain and other countries. The American Association of Equine Practitioners, the Animal Health Foundation, Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation and many other groups are supporting the work. And the efforts are getting results.

"In cryotherapy, we have the first treatment ever shown to be effective in sepsis-related laminitis," says Dr. James Belknap. "We are getting there on endocrine-related laminitis. We know that it's insulin related, and we have identified critical metabolic pathways that are involved. Researchers are investigating the use of drugs to block those pathways. And we've learned how important management is for these horses."

For sepsis- and endocrine-related laminitis, it's likely that the answer will be polytherapy—multiple treatments, rather than a single fix, he says. "For supporting-leg laminitis we need something prophylactic to prevent the sudden and catastrophic separation that's typical with this form. It's probably going to be mechanical, rather than a drug." One possibility is a pneumatic shoe, currently in development, with an air bladder that keeps the foot in slight but constant motion to maintain the circulation.

started before signs appear and even later, started when the horse first shows signs of lameness. It won't save every horse, but there is a tenfold increase in risk if the horse is not iced," Dr. Belknap says. "We know less about the effects of cryotherapy in endocrine-related and supporting-limb laminitis." In those types there is no identifiable, immediate triggering event, and a horse can't be kept on ice for weeks. But icing may still help when signs appear. "It certainly won't hurt, and I would use it," he says.

Keeping the horse's feet and lower limbs submerged in crushed ice around the clock is labor-intensive, he adds. A new ice boot developed by Soft-Ride with the input of Drs. Belknap and van Eps may help. Ice wraps aren't as effective; the foot needs to be immersed in ice water.

**Ease pain and inflammation:** The go-to medications for this are nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, mainly flunixin meglumine (Banamine®) and phenylbutazone, which reduce pain as they break the cycle of inflammation. The dosage usually starts high and is adjusted as severe signs (pulse, pain, heat) ease.

**Support the feet:** To take strain off the laminae, remove the horse's shoes, which put most of his weight on the hoof wall. Support the sole by taping on commercial supports or foam pads. Any exercise could cause the laminae to give way, so keep the horse in a stall. Bed it deeply (or provide soft but supportive

footing, such as sand) to provide cushion and encourage him to lie down as much as possible.

X-rays are essential to see if the coffin bone is displaced. If they show rotation, the vet may advise raising the heels with taped-on pads and resilient putty. This reduces the pull of the deep flexor tendon on the coffin bone. If supports don't stabilize the bone, a cast may do the trick. In clinics, a sling is sometimes used to take weight off the horse's feet.

The next few weeks are critical. If you can halt displacement in that time, the foot will usually stabilize. Your vet will take follow-up X-rays to see what's happening in the foot. Meanwhile, monitor your horse closely and call your vet if you see

- the return of heat in the feet or a bounding digital pulse.
- signs that your horse's pain is increasing. Watch him in his stall: If he moves around comfortably when he's not resting, he's probably not in too much pain. If he becomes less willing to move, be concerned.
- cracking at the coronary band or cracking or a bulge on the sole. These signs signal an emergency—the coffin bone is displacing.

## The Road Back

Once the foot is stable, the long process of repairing the damage can begin. It can take a year for healthy new hoof to fully grow in, and the laminae won't be firmly

**Corrective shoeing can help a laminitic hoof grow out as close as possible to its normal position in relation to the coffin bone. An aluminum egg-bar or other traditional shoe combined with various pads protects the sole and raises the heels.**



© DUSTY PERIN



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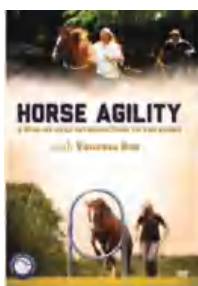


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**FAR LEFT:** This natural-break shoe with frog support and an Equi-Pak filled pad absorb shock and concussion.

**LEFT:** A full-rocker design shoe like the Seward Clog helps support the sole while allowing for easier breakover. It can make a big difference to bring the coffin bone back into alignment.

attached until then.

Corrective shoeing can help the hoof grow out as close as possible to its normal position in relation to the bone. Work as a team with your vet and an experienced farrier to devise a long-range plan tailored to your horse's needs. Your vet will take follow-up X-rays to guide the work. Each case is different, Dr. Belknap says, but most recovering horses do better with

shoes than without as long as the shoes fit the case and provide support for the sole. The options include:

- customized heart-bar, egg-bar or other traditional shoes combined with various types of pads.
- commercial shoeing systems designed for laminitis recovery. Several of these use bevel-front aluminum shoes set back at the toe to relieve the stress of breakover

with pads and support materials to protect the sole and raise the heels as needed.

■ full-rocker designs like the Seward Clog, which allow easy breakover in any direction. "The clog shoe can make a huge difference as a tool to bring the distal phalanx back into alignment," Dr. Belknap says, but it's not a shoe for long-term use. "It's a step to get back to a regular shoe—use it two to four months, six at most."

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■ Soft-Ride Comfort boots, which can be fitted with gel orthotics and used with or without a rocker bottom.

When can the horse get out of the stall? When he's past the acute stage and moving comfortably in his shoes, ask your vet if you can hand-walk or turn him out in a small paddock with level, soft footing. Moving around improves circulation and may promote recovery, but doing too much too soon definitely has risks. A horse with severe displacement and massive damage to the laminae will obviously need to be in a stall longer than a mild case. Wait until enough healthy hoof has grown in to support the horse's weight.

The outlook for full recovery is best in mild cases. If there's no displacement, the horse may be able to begin light work in three or four months. The chances for return to full work are slim if the coffin bone sinks severely or rotates 15 degrees or more.

## Lingering Problems

A horse who has had one episode of laminitis is at risk for more. That's especially so for horses with endocrine-related laminitis. "Management is critical for these horses," Dr. Belknap says. They need a diet low in sugars and other carbohydrates with strictly limited grazing. Obesity contributes to equine metabolic syndrome, and exercise can help keep weight down. If the horse isn't sound enough for that, the synthetic thyroid hormone levothyroxine may help him lose weight. Some research suggests that the drug metformin may help lower insulin levels. Horses with equine Cushing's disease can benefit hugely from the drug pergolide.

Even without a recurrence, a horse can have chronic problems after laminitis. Uncorrected rotation can cause the hoof wall to dish at the toe, strain the laminae and set the stage for infections in the foot. The pressure of the coffin bone on the sole

can make him chronically sore and lead to deep abscesses.

A lot can be done to help. Your vet can flush deep abscesses that can't be reached by soaking. Your farrier can bevel the front of the horse's foot to reduce strain on weak laminae and apply shoes and pads that protect the sole. Still, a horse who has chronic discomfort may need anti-inflammatory drugs for an extended time.

When trimming and shoeing don't correct rotation, an operation called tenotomy sometimes helps. The surgeon cuts the deep digital flexor tendon to relieve its pull on the coffin bone. The horse will need a year of intensive aftercare, starting with three months of stall rest while the tendon heals and corrective shoeing slowly brings the bone back to a more normal angle. These horses seldom return to full work, but they are often pasture sound for at least several years. 🐾

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# How do I get my horse's head down?

**Q** I have a Quarter Horse/Arab/Paint who excels in the hunter ring over fences, but he isn't impressive on the flat because he is high-headed. I try to make him rounder by applying pressure with my legs while squeezing and releasing the reins and also training with draw reins though nothing works. He is a really good mover, but his head always gets in the way.

**JAMIE MANN**

**A** Not all horses have the ideal conformation to allow them to travel naturally with the lower head carriage desired in the hunter ring. However, many horses whose conformation produces a high head carriage can be taught to flex and carry themselves rounder in the bridle. Both to appeal to the judge in your under-saddle classes and to progress with the rest of your horse's education, he must learn to go on the bit. Even a horse who wasn't taught this fundamental lesson early in his career can still learn it. And knowing how to teach horses this lesson is an essential skill for every rider.

Start by going back to square one: getting your horse in front of your leg and finding the corners of his mouth. Spend a lot of time teaching him to accept steady contact between the bit and your hands. First, ask him to walk forward with plenty of impulsion. After that, add just enough leg pressure until he almost trots. Then stop him from trotting by taking a soft feel of both reins to very gently say "no." This is the light contact you want to feel all the time. Hav-

ing contact does not mean having a *lot* of contact, but it also means never having *no* contact. Even if it's just half an ounce of pressure, your horse has to learn to accept this feel and never try to throw it away.

When he is accepting this contact at the walk, repeat the same aids at the trot and then, eventually, the canter. Work through these steps slowly. Always close your legs first, asking him to move forward into the bridle, before closing your fingers on the reins. Remember, as all the great trainers say, the only thing that keeps a horse's mouth soft is your leg.

The next step is to ask your horse to flex in his poll and jaw and come on the bit. There are two ways to do that. First, you can ask with a direct rein, along the lines of the squeezing and releasing you described in your question. Second, you can ask with an indirect rein by practicing lateral movements. The simplest of these is the shoulder-fore.

Teach your horse the shoulder-fore at the walk. Always start by asking him to go forward. Then use your inside leg to move his inside hind leg slightly to the outside. So, for example, if you're tracking to the left, squeeze your left leg until his left hind leg moves over just enough to step between the tracks of his front legs. Meanwhile, maintain the proper rein

length to allow a light contact on both reins with your hands 2 inches above the mane and 4 to 6 inches apart.

You may not get a reaction from your horse at first. That doesn't mean you gave the wrong aids. He might need several repetitions to understand the concept. As soon as he does, give him plenty of praise and pats.

Lateral movement can easily destroy forward impulsion, so ask for only a few steps at a time, then immediately go forward again. Repeat: lateral, for-



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A light, steady contact will help you achieve your main goal in the under-saddle classes: showing off your horse's movement, cadence and rhythm in all three gaits.

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ward, lateral, forward. Try this in both directions. Reward him whenever he does it right.

Gradually, as your horse learns to move away from one of your legs into the opposite rein, he'll begin to yield more in the bridle. Don't try to rush the process by seesawing with your hands, moving the bit right and left in his mouth. This ruins the good contact you're working so hard to establish. The movement in your hands—and the rocking motion of your horse's nose—also detracts from the beautiful picture you're trying to create for the judge. A light, steady contact will



Remember, as all the great trainers say, the only thing that keeps a horse's mouth soft is your leg.

help you achieve your main goal in the under-saddle classes: to show off your horse's movement, cadence and rhythm—as well as a pleasant head carriage—in all three gaits. 🐾

**Jamie Mann** and her mother bought her earliest mounts for around \$500 each on the Caliente Racetrack in Tijuana, Mexico. Primarily self-taught, she says, "I grew up reading Gordon Wright's book, *Learning to Ride, Hunt, and Show*. It was my bible." At 17, she rode a 3-year-old appendix Quarter Horse in the Maclay Finals. She then worked at an A-circuit East Coast stable for 10 years. During that time, she co-trained the 1981 ASPCA Maclay champion, Lisa Castellucci, and competed Lisa's legendary show hunter *Touch the Sun* (featured in our October 2015 issue). Also a successful grand prix jumper, Jamie won a World Cup qualifier in 1981 and was an alternate for the USET in 1982. She then started a training business, Atlantis Farm, with her mother in California and coached Richard Spooner to a win in the 1988 USET Show Jumping Talent Search Finals—West. Now based in Senoia, Georgia, Jamie is welcoming new clients.

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# 6 Things to Do in FEBRUARY

❑ **JOIN** Pony Club members and volunteers in Orlando, FL, for the USPC Annual Meeting and Equine Symposium, Feb. 4–7. Highlights include educational workshops, lectures by industry experts, presentations by Pony Club members and an extensive trade fair; [www.ponyclub.org](http://www.ponyclub.org).

❑ **LEARN** training techniques and more at the Horse Expo Pomona, Feb. 5–7, in Pomona, CA. Clinicians include Clinton Anderson, Pat Parelli and Richard Winters. Also featured: a trail symposium and the Super Horse Challenge; [www.horseexpoevents.com](http://www.horseexpoevents.com).

❑ **CHECK OUT** the debut of FEI week at HITS Thermal, where equestrians will compete in the \$350,000 FEI Grand Prix CSI\*\*\*\*\*, Feb. 7, in Thermal, CA; [www.hitsshows.com](http://www.hitsshows.com).

❑ **FOLLOW** top show jumpers as they attempt to qualify for the upcoming Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Final. Subscribe to [www.feitv.org](http://www.feitv.org) for up-close coverage of the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping Wellington, Feb. 7; Thermal, Feb. 13; and Ocala, Feb. 27. Visit [www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com](http://www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com) or *Practical Horseman's* Facebook page for competition coverage.

❑ **APPLY** for two scholarships offered by the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association: the Intercollegiate Equestrian Foundation Scholarship (deadline Feb. 10) and the Jon Conyers Memorial Scholarship (deadline Feb. 24); [www.ihsainc.com](http://www.ihsainc.com).

❑ **ENTER** *Practical Horseman's* Ultimate RK3DE Experience contest with Kent Nutrition Group for a chance to win a trip to the 2016 Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event, April 28–May 1 in Lexington, KY (deadline Mar. 4). Grand prize includes event tickets and VIP hospitality for two plus much more. Enter at [www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com](http://www.PracticalHorsemanMag.com).

## Greetings from HARRODSBURG, KENTUCKY



The 200-acre Big Red Stables in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, has been in Emily Dennis' family for generations. It is located not far from Shaker Village, in an area of beautiful meadows, forests and rolling hills. I glided along on Shadow, a charming bay Tennessee Walking Horse who took care of me all during the ride even as we raced through an open field.

Emily grew up on the farm, and riding in her company is special for the intimate insights she shares. Her mother started Big Red Stables to offer boarding and guided trail rides, and Emily is determined to carry on. A number of families in the area have parceled off their land and sold their ranches in recent years because running a farm is hard work and owning and maintaining considerable acreage is expensive.

After riding by one of the many stone fences that dot the countryside, Emily pointed to the limestone-laden soil. It is one reason why horses bred in Kentucky

grow so strong. It also nurtures the area's bluegrass, so called because of the bluish-purple tint that it has in the spring and summer. We ventured along trails shaded by cherry blossoms en route to the old barn that has stood on the property for more than 150 years. In front of this historic structure Emily conveyed her hope of passing the family farm to her son.

Best,  
*Darley*

**Darley Newman** is the founder of Equitrekking Travel and host of two-time Daytime Emmy-award-winning TV series *Equitrekking* on PBS. For more information, visit [www.Equitrekking.com](http://www.Equitrekking.com) or [www.EquitrekkingTravel.com](http://www.EquitrekkingTravel.com).

### Fergus BY JEAN ABERNETHY



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# News BITS

## Longines FEI World Cup™ Latest League Standings

At press time and with four qualifiers remaining in the Longines FEI World Cup™ Jumping North American League, **Jack “Hardin” Towell**, USA, was leading the North American East Coast League and **Karl Cook**, USA, was leading the

North American West Coast League.



Jack Towell and Lucifer V



Karl Cook and Jonkeer Z

The top seven athletes from the East Coast U.S., top three riders from the West Coast U.S. and the two best-placed athletes from Canada and Mexico will qualify for the 2016 World Cup Final, March 23–28, in Gothenburg, Sweden, alongside winners of 13 leagues from around the world.

Others at the top of the East Coast League were **Beezie Madden** (USA), **Kent Farrington** (USA), **Samuel Parot** (CHI), **Laura Kraut** (USA), **Quentin Judge** (USA), **Mclain Ward** (USA) and **Callan Solem** (USA).

Additional riders at the top of the West Coast League were **Will Simpson** (USA) and **Richard Fellers** (USA). **Ben Asselin** and **Lisa Carlsen** were heading the Canadian contingent, and **Alberto Michan Halbinger** and **Manuel Senderos** were leading the Mexican riders.

## USHJA Meeting: Dramatic Changes Approved

Once a controversial subject, microchipping competition horses got the go-ahead to usher in a new era of fairness during the U.S. Hunter Jumper Association’s annual meeting in Orlando, Florida. The U.S. Equestrian Federation has to approve everything enacted at the USHJA’s December session, but the strong consensus in favor of a foolproof method of identification indicated microchipping would become mandatory.

The USHJA’s timeline calls for a Dec. 1, 2017 start date, after which points toward high-score awards would not count for animals without microchips. As of Dec. 1, 2018, horses and ponies in hunter, jumper, hunter breeding and hunter and jumping seat equitation classes (except those restricted by breed) that aren’t microchipped would not be permitted to compete in recognized shows.



Summer Stoffel of the USHJA Jumper Breeding Task Force

# Winner's CIRCLE

## Alfano Reaches \$1 Million Mark

With a first-place finish in the \$50,000 Duchossois Cup at the Rolex Central Park Horse Show last September, professional **Jennifer Alfano** gained entry into the U.S. Hunter Jumper Association’s



Jennifer Alfano and Jersey Boy

Elite \$1 Million Club. She accumulated earnings throughout her professional career, which included big wins with her famed partner Jersey Boy.

“I’m so lucky,” said Alfano, who is a two-time USHJA World Championship Hunter Rider Professional Champion and a National Show Hunter Hall of Fame inductee. “I have a great group of horses and a great group of owners. I just want to keep going like I’m going.”

Alfano joins **Kelly Farmer**, **Peter Pletcher**, **Scott Stewart** and **John French** in the USHJA Elite \$1 Million Club.

# News BITS

The watchwords for microchipping were “consumer confidence.” It also is viewed as

a positive for horse welfare, enabling veterinarians to track infected animals with an eye toward preventing major disease outbreaks as well as a means for finding horses that are lost or stolen.

Oklahoma warmblood breeder Summer Stoffel, a member of the USHJA

heights, based on age for horses 5 and under, 6 and 7 years old.

This was a project that took several years to develop, with trainer Geoff Teall—who has been involved in previous innovative approaches to the hunter division—serving as point man. The consummate volunteer said the process began because, “It was time to revisit the green hunter world as we see it and look at it as a whole, trying to get it to represent what is happening in the sport.” He noted there had been a lot of interest from members, adding, “I’m hoping people will have a renewed interest in young horses.”

The divisions will work with the Pre-Green incentive to create a hunter pipeline aimed at giving breeders options for their animals and, USHJA board members hope, creating more of a market for U.S.-bred horses.

■ **Growth:** Another topic of concern for those who attended the meeting is a lack of growth in equestrian sports. USHJA statistics indicate an increase of only 1 percent in nine years. Meanwhile, competitors’ migration patterns have changed (think of the hordes who head south to show in the winter). And although more horses are competing, there are less people in the active-members category.

All of this prompted the June 2015 creation of the Sport Growth Advisory Group, which is paying attention to the grassroots and middle levels of showing to increase participation and build the

base. A key component is the establishment of a USHJA national championship show including every division offered by the affiliate. It will be held indoors in the autumn of 2017 at a location yet to be designated. Competition will run from the zone level through semi-finals for people to qualify for the new show.

“Everybody has a way to be involved in it,” said USHJA President Bill Moroney, extolling the concept’s virtues. “There are very few programs in any organization that have a component that can involve every single member of your organization.”—*Nancy Jaffer*

## USEA Meeting: Planning for the Future

More than 400 members of the United States Eventing Association headed to Washington, D.C., in December to both reflect on the 2015 season and look to the future by discussing the biggest challenges facing eventing in the United States. Key topics at the USEA’s annual meeting and convention included:

■ **Participation:** The Eventing 2016–2026 Summit and Town Hall Meeting generated a lively discussion among members on questions ranging from how to curb rising competition costs to accommodating a high demand from organizers for certain calendar dates.

The association reported that membership is up by about 4 percent from last year and the number of members—12,139—is the most since 2008, when the Great Recession adversely affected the economy. In addition, the number of starters—members competing in recognized events—is up by about 8 percent, but the USEA noted that a large number of riders are choosing to show in unrecognized competitions. It was proposed that a focus group be created to examine ways to lower entry fees and reduce rules and regulations at recognized events.

“We believe that if low-cost divisions can be created with common-sense regulations and rules, it would attract some of the competitors currently competing



**Geoff Teall, the USHJA’s national vice president, was the point man for the new green and young hunter initiatives.**

Jumper Working Group Jumper Breeding Task Force, had done intensive research on microchipping and gave a convincing presentation about its benefits while dispelling many of the myths surrounding it to make an effective case for its passage.

The initiative was one of several dramatic changes to the landscape of showing that emerged at the five-day meeting of the largest USEF affiliate, which has more than 44,000 members. Fraud has been a concern in connection with competition for green horses, as it often is impossible to know the true mileage of animals imported from Europe. Microchipping will help solve that problem. It clears the way for revamped green hunter divisions based on height of fences, rather than the traditional first- and second-year designations, and adding a young hunter division at various fence



**USHJA President Bill Moroney presents the Volunteer of the Year award to board member Debbie Bass (center), with the assistance of Marla Holt, the organization’s managing director of awards.**





**CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT:** Tim and Nina Gardner accept the PRO As You Like It Owner's Award with Jennie Brannigan (left) and PRO President Allison Springer (right).

Per tradition, Jim Wofford emcees the 2015 Year-End Awards Luncheon.

Phillip Dutton accepts the Welcome Home Farm Award for winning the PRO Tour Series, with PRO Awards Committee Chair Mark Hart and PRO President Allison Springer in the background.

USEA President Diane Pitts (right) gives Heather Morris a hug after she accepted the \$25,000 Connaught Grant for Team Express Group's Charlie Tango. The grant is for a CCI\* or CCI\*\* horse who shows potential to represent the United States team on the international stage.



at unrecognized events," said Howard Simpson, a USEF board member.

■ **Volunteers:** The Board of Governors approved the creation of a Volunteer Committee chaired by USEA President-elect Carol Kozlowski. A proposal to develop a USEA Volunteer Incentive Program was also approved. The program for recognizing volunteers, creating a national database, launching an awards program and developing incentives was initially spearheaded by the late Seema Sonnad, a beloved rider, volunteer, owner and official who died in May.

"Through the USEA we can promote volunteerism, get people involved who weren't involved previously, grow membership, help the organizers and increase volunteers," said Bonnie Kibbie, a Volunteer Committee member. "Individual shows do great things for volunteers, but we need to create one top-down system to streamline the process and recognize volunteers for what they do."

■ **New level:** The USEF Eventing Technical Committee approved the addition of a new Modified level to bridge the gap between Training and Preliminary levels and provide a steppingstone for riders looking to move up to Preliminary.

Modified level will have its own dressage test and the maximum height of jumps will be 3-foot-5. Organizers will not be required to offer the new level at recognized events. If they do, they can combine Training and Preliminary level fences to create a cross-country course. At press time, Modified level was awaiting final approval of the USEF at its annual meeting.—*Jenni Autry*

## USDF: Finals' Site Selection Dominates

The sheer size of the United States—some 3,000 miles from coast to coast—was at the heart of a protracted battle at the 2015 Adequan/United States Dressage Federation Annual Convention in Las Vegas. At issue during the December meeting: the site of future U.S. Dressage Finals, the sport's national championships held in late autumn.

Green-lighted for creation in 2011 by the USDF Board of Governors, the Finals were to be held for three years, beginning in 2013, at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, then they were to move west. (That period eventually was extended to four years so that the 2016 Finals will be held in Kentucky, too.)

A site-selection committee headed by USDF President George Williams and current Finals organizer and former USDF Secretary Janine Malone proposed the HITS Thermal Desert Horse Park, in Thermal, California, as the location of the event beginning in 2017. But the



Chicago-based fitness pro and dressage rider Jennifer Kotylo leads early-morning risers in the Hundred, a basic Pilates exercise, at the 2015 Adequan/USDF Annual Convention in Las Vegas.

idea didn't sit well with numerous BOG delegates, who represent USDF's membership at the annual meeting.

The BOG, it was pointed out, has the authority to overturn previous BOG decisions. And so the 2015 BOG found itself voting on motions atop motions: to

# News BITS

keep the Finals in Kentucky permanently as well as to move it west for one year, in 2017.

Any such decision has ramifications, of course, ranging from a perceived snub of USDF's western regions to frustration on the part of East Coasters who view Kentucky as central and not east to financial

the 2015 USDF Lifetime Achievement Award. Its recipient, Lloyd Landkamer—a former Region 4 director and internationally known show manager—had lost his battle with cancer in September.

—Jennifer O. Bryant

## USEA Hall of Fame Honors 10

Seven individuals and three horses were inducted into the U.S. Eventing Association Hall of Fame, Dec. 5, during the organization's annual meeting and convention in Washington, D.C. Those honored for their dedication to the betterment of the sport of eventing include:

**Rebecca Broussard**—Prior to her death in 2010, Broussard supported numerous USEA and U.S. Equestrian Federation programs. She was a U.S. Equestrian Team board member, a USEA Endowment Foundation trustee and

a member of the USEA Board of Governors and Executive Committee. In addition to owning numerous event horses for top riders, she frequently volunteered at events in Area VII and conceived The Event at Rebecca Farm in Montana—one of the largest eventing competitions in the United States.

**Mike Huber**—A leading rider and coach, Huber has experienced international success at the World Champion-

ships, Pan American Games, World Equestrian Games and Olympic Games. He has served on the USEA Board of Governors and the USET/USEF Selection Com-



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**Mike Huber**

mittee. A former USEA president, Huber currently chairs the USEF Eventing High Performance Committee and the USEF Eventing Technical Committee.

**Jacqueline Mars**—Horse owner and philanthropist Mars has guided the careers of many top international riders. She supports the development of the next generation of elite eventing competitors by focusing on both the Young Rid-

ers and Young and Future Event Horse programs. Among the top horses Mars has owned are Winter's Tale, The Native, Prince Panache, Giltedge, Regal Scot and Shannon.

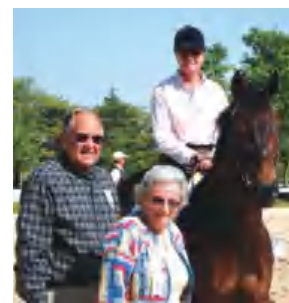


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**Jacqueline Mars**

**Richard and Vita Thompson**—Members of Pennsylvania's Radnor Hunt Club, the Thompsons were involved with the sport of eventing for five decades. From 2010 until his death in 2012, Richard was the hunt club's president.

Together with his wife, who died in 2008, he owned and supported many prominent international-level



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**Richard and Vita Thompson**

horses for U.S. team selection. Their most famous horse was Biko, who successfully represented the U.S. with Karen O'Connor. Named USEA Horse of the



©JENNIFER BRYANT

**ABOVE LEFT:** USDF President George Williams and Vice President Lisa Gorretta pose with a photo of Lloyd Landkamer, who posthumously received the USDF Lifetime Achievement Award.



**ABOVE RIGHT:** Lisa Lindholm of Minnesota (center) received the Adequan/USDF Third Level Open Champion award from the Fell Pony Society of North America for her pony, Laurelhigland Victor (Towerview Spirit of Joy-Sledale Liv V), from USDF Executive Director Stephan Hienzsch and Adequan representative Wiss Costanza.

and contractual issues that could stem from making a single-year commitment with a show grounds. BOG delegates lined up at the microphones to voice their opinions for more than an hour in total, their passion attesting to the rapidity with which this championships has become a flagship event and a sought-after opportunity for competitors.

The eventual, uneasy compromise: a vote, 992–459, to keep the Finals at the Kentucky Horse Park “until such time that the western USDF regions...can come forth with a proposed venue site and dates that the four regions agree are appropriate to host the national finals.”

The USDF convention concluded with the Salute Gala & Annual Awards Banquet. The gala was marked by an especially poignant moment as friends and colleagues reacted to the presentation of



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**Rebecca Broussard's family (from left) Sarah, Jerome and Rebecca accepts the Hall of Fame award in her honor.**



Century, he was inducted into the USEA Hall of Fame in 2006.

**Margaret Lindsley Warden**—A proponent of expanding international-caliber eventing beyond the military to include civilian riders, Warden organized and ran the first U.S. horse trials in 1952 in Nashville, Tennessee—an event that continues today. She also founded the Middle Tennessee Pony Club, was a member of the Board of Directors of the U.S. Equestrian Team and wrote the “Horse Sense” column for the *Nashville Tennessean* newspaper. She died in 2008 at age 103.

**Jo Whitehouse**—A passionate supporter of eventing, Whitehouse worked tirelessly for the USEA for more than 25 years. As its chief executive officer for the past 17, she has seen the sport change and grow dramatically. Among many accomplishments, she was instrumental in advancing the Young Event Horse Program during her USEA tenure.

**McKinlaigh**—Purchased in Ireland by Thom Schultz and his wife, Laura Coats, McKinlaigh and rider Gina Miles moved up the ranks, ultimately winning the individual silver medal for the United States at the 2008 Olympic Games in Hong Kong. The tall liver chestnut Irish



**Margaret Lindsley Warden**

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Sport Horse gelding was named 2006 and 2008 USEA Advanced Horse of the Year. He won the team gold and individual bronze medal at the 2007 Pan American Games and has a long list of accomplishments at the CCI\*\*\* and CCI\*\*\*\* levels throughout his decade-long partnership with Miles.

**Molokai**—An off-the-track 4-year-old when he was found by Dorothy Trapp Crowell, Molokai lived up to his rider's initial appraisal: She knew he was a special horse. Together the pair won the individual silver medal for the U.S.



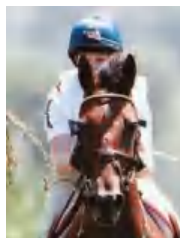
**Molokai and Dorothy Trapp Crowell graced the cover of Practical Horseman in November 1994.**

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at the 1994 World Equestrian Games. The bold Thoroughbred competed at Badminton, Burghley and Kentucky with top-10 finishes. At the 1998 Kentucky CCI\*\*\*\*, Molokai finished second and received the USEF Pinnacle

Trophy for the highest-placed American in the four-star—the first time the trophy had been awarded.

**Winsome Adante**—Affectionately known as Dan, the English-bred Thoroughbred has been at the top of the USEA's Historic All Time High Point Horse Leaderboard for more than 10 years. He was USEA Horse of the Year three times, and with rider Kimberly Severson won the individual silver medal for the United States at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens and the team gold medal at the 2006 World Equestrian Games in Aachen. His illustrious career also includes a record three wins at the Rolex Kentucky Three-Day Event CCI\*\*\*\*. 🏆



**Winsome Adante**

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# The Grain–Brain Connection

A diet high in grain can make a horse hyper, it's widely thought. But why? New research points to a surprising link between behavior and changes in the gut microbiome, the community of microbes living in the intestine of the horse.

Microbes in the hindgut (the cecum and large intestine) help horses digest fibrous plant materials like cellulose, which make up a large part of their natural diet. The microbes ferment the fibrous material, breaking it down into sugar (glucose) and volatile fatty acids, which are the primary fuel for most body tissues. But scientists are just beginning to learn about the many other ways they affect equine health.



A recent study shows that horses on high-grain rations spent more time being alert for signs of danger than those on an all-hay diet.

Researchers at the French agricultural institute AgroSup Dijon carried out a study to see not only how a change in diet would affect the gut microbiome but also whether those effects were associated with changes in equine behavior. The six horses in the study were switched from an all-hay diet to a high-grain diet (57 percent hay and 43 percent barley), and the researchers analyzed microbes from the horses' hindguts on both diets. The diet switch was made gradually over five days to avoid the sort of sudden intestinal disruption that can lead to colic and diarrhea. Still, the high-grain diet triggered significant changes in the microbe community, including increases in types associated with hindgut acidosis. (Acidosis—basically, increased acidity in the large intestine—can be the first step on the path to more serious intestinal disorders.)

To assess behavior, the researchers recorded 18-hour continuous videos of the horses before and after the feed change to measure the time they spent lying down, resting, feeding and

being alert for signs of danger (vigilant). They also tested the horses' reactions to unfamiliar objects by placing a novel object near a feeder in a test arena and to the presence of an unfamiliar horse in an adjoining stall. On the high-grain ration, horses spent more time being vigilant—and the change in their behavior correlated with the changes in their gut bacteria.

The results confirm that diet-related changes in the hindgut microbiome are linked to changes in behavior. By implication, the study authors write, "Behavioral cues may be used as noninvasive indicators of alimentary stress." So if your once-mellow horse turns hyper, you might look in his feed bucket for the cause.

## HIGH-TECH IMAGING

A new state-of-the-art imaging system at the University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton Center promises to let veterinarians peer deep within a horse's body in ways not possible until now. Scheduled for installation early this year, the system can capture images of practically any part of the horse's anatomy. And it can be used while the horse is standing—or even moving on a treadmill.

High-tech imaging methods like computed tomography have become essential tools for veterinarians, but a practical obstacle has kept horses from getting all the benefits. A horse's body simply won't fit into the opening of a traditional CT scanner, so the device can be used to image only parts that do—the head, a portion of the neck and lower limbs. And while some CT systems can obtain images of the head and upper neck with the horse awake and standing, "General anesthesia is still required to image the limbs," says JoAnn Slack, DVM, associate professor of cardiology and ultrasound at New Bolton.

The new system, which has the trade name Equimag<sup>TM</sup>, gets around that problem by using four industrial robots to manipulate the X-ray equipment. The robots are positioned around the horse to create an open, flexible scanning structure. "Most horses will need to be sedated

## Tack Room

in order to stand still for the procedure. However, general anesthesia will not be required in most cases," says Dr. Slack, who will manage clinical diagnostic use.

The open structure will let veterinarians get detailed views of hard-to-image sites like the back, neck, pelvis and upper limbs and to see bones, joints and tendons in weight-bearing positions. Besides CT scans, the system can perform tomosynthesis, in which images taken from multiple angles are used to construct computerized three-dimensional views. Its high-speed radiographic camera can operate at up to 16,000 frames per second.

New Bolton is the first equine clinic to use the EquiImagine™ system. It was designed in cooperation with Four Di-



The open structure of a new imaging system will let veterinarians get detailed views of hard-to-image sites like the back, neck, pelvis and upper limbs and to see bones, joints and tendons in weight-bearing positions.

mensional Digital Imaging, a New York company that originally developed the technology for human medicine. The "fourth dimension" in this case is time, Dr. Slack says, and refers to fluoroscopy, another capability of the system. Fluoroscopy sends a continuous stream of data to a monitor, producing a 3D video image that changes over time. Used with a treadmill, this will let veterinarians view internal structures while the horse is in motion.

The ability to obtain high-resolution CT images without general anesthesia, to image body parts that don't fit into a traditional CT gantry and to capture dynamic images of the moving horse are major benefits, Dr. Slack says. They will make the system valuable for research and teaching as well as clinical use.

—Elaine Pascoe 🐾

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# From Saudi Stables to the American University Barn

By LA Pomeroy

For 31-year-old Fatyiah El Frih, joining the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association hunt seat team at American University in Washington, DC, has been both exhilarating and a bit intimidating. A freshman pursuing a degree in Communications, Economics, Law and Government, she says, "I sent almost half a dozen emails to the barn before school even started because I wanted so badly to try out for the team and not miss the first meeting. I was so worried I might not be accepted."

She needn't have been quite so concerned, says Eagles teammate Hannah Goldbach, an AU sophomore majoring in neurosci-

ence. From the beginning, Fatyiah seemed to dedicate herself to fitting in. "She's one of the most motivated people I've ever met," Hannah says. "She came to our trial lesson at the start of the semester and spent most of it on the longe line. Normally, if people find out they can't go straight into group lessons they drop out or quit. But when our coach asked if Fatyiah was OK with a few private lessons first, she said, 'If that's what I have to do to get to show with the rest of the

at the time. "A year to the day later, my parents bought a house and we started working and rebuilding our lives."

For Fatyiah and her older sister that meant bringing their considerable sports skills to their new high school. "In the first year, we became the Baltimore City tennis and city soccer champions," she remembers. Eventually, Fatyiah graduated and earned certification to teach English as a second language. Then she was offered the opportunity to move to Saudi Arabia as an English teacher at King Saud University and privately tutor the granddaughter of King Abdullah.

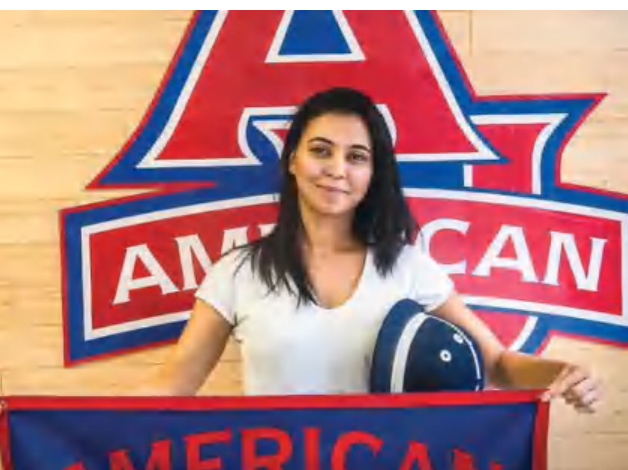
"The king's children rode, so I started riding," Fatyiah explains. "It was a whole other world. Since women are not allowed to drive, a chauffeured car picked me up each morning to bring me to the palace. The horses were breathtaking. I would hear that this one or that one was worth a million dollars or more. A lot of things about horse care I never had to learn because the king had people who did that for us."

It was a luxury, indeed, but one that eventually would become a source of some consternation.

The first time AU coach Astrid "Star" Dalley told Fatyiah "to arrive 30 minutes early to prepare my horse, I was terrified to tell anyone I didn't know what that meant. I felt like I would cry because I was so embarrassed. But I went up to another coach and asked, what does 'prepare' mean? For the next 45 minutes, she showed me, step by step, helping me with doing what you just won't see Saudi princesses doing.

"I was so grateful," Fatyiah says. "I had spent 20 years dreaming about riding and showing horses. That turned out to be the best lesson of my entire life."

Now the dedicated collegiate rider, Fatyiah, who is also the mother of three (sons ages 6 and 10 and a daughter age 9) has no qualms about heading to the American University stable, where, she says, "Star has done a great job pairing me with a mare named Twinkles." 🐾



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**Fatyiah El Frih, an IHSA hunt seat team member at American University**

girls, I'll do whatever it takes."

That has been Fatyiah's approach for nearly all of her life and it seems to have served her well. She was 6 years old when her parents fled with their seven children from Algerian political unrest. They sought asylum in western Germany and made a new home as refugees in a small town outside of Frankfurt, along the border of France.

"Overnight, we left the only home I had ever known. I still recall the refugee camps and how we had to renew an application for asylum every six months. After 10 years [in 2000], we were told there could be no more renewals."

So the United Nations High Commission for Refugees helped the family apply for asylum in the United States. "It was a year's process to apply. We cried when we got approval," Fatyiah says. Her family was given six weeks to pack and move to an American city chosen by the International Rescue Committee.

"They sent us to Baltimore, Maryland" says, Fatyiah, who was 16

\*A lot of things about horse care I never had to learn because the king had people who did that for us."





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